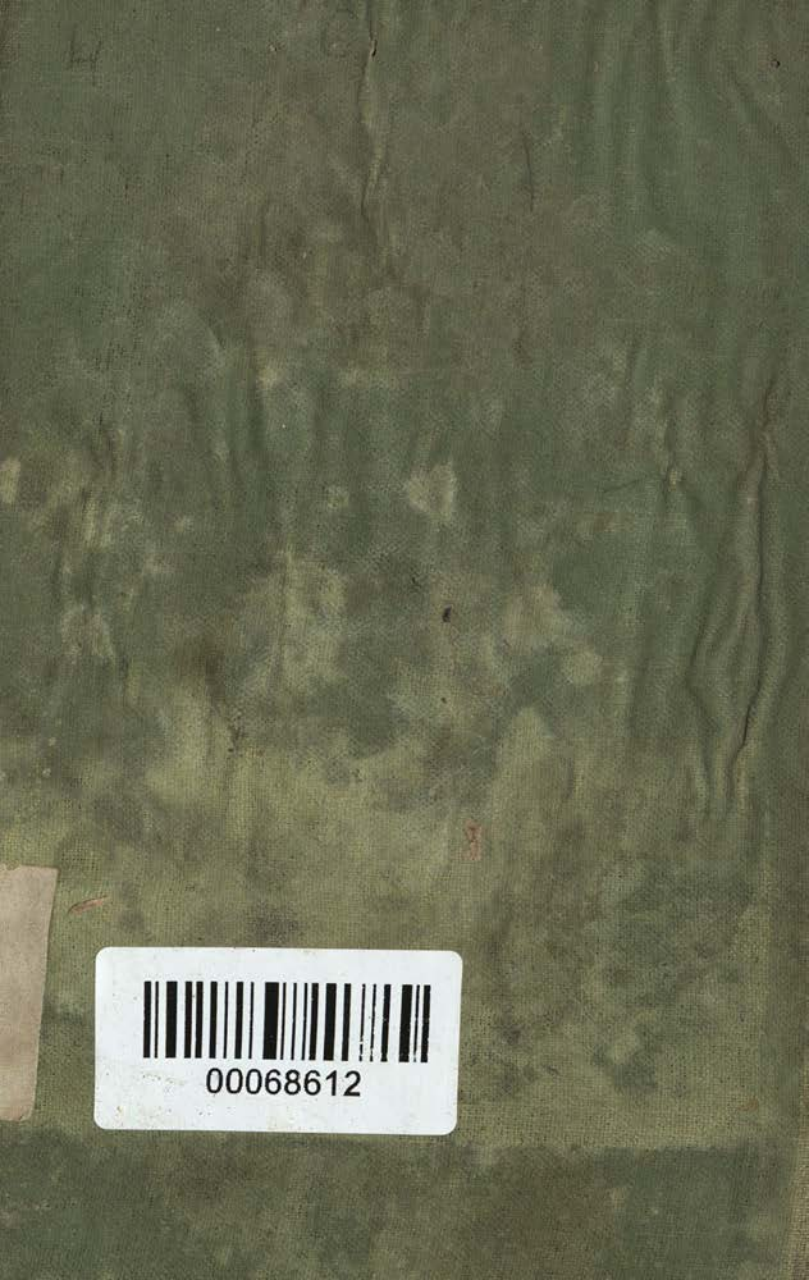
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# OCCULT ESSAYS

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# OCCULT ESSAYS

BY

A. P. SINNETT

AUTHOR OF
"ESOTERIC BUDDHISM," "THE GROWTH OF THE SOUL,"
ETC., ETC.

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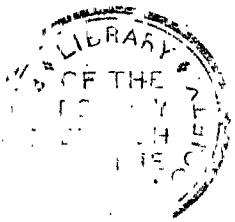

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# PREFACE

ALL the essays contained in this volume have originally appeared in the pages of *Broad Views*, the monthly periodical which I have been editing for the last two years, and the value of which as an influence promoting the appreciation of occult study in its bearings on the practical affairs of life, will, I trust, be more and more clearly apprehended as time goes on.

Occult study has gone through various phases. At first its intense interest, as illuminating realms of Nature that formerly seemed beyond the reach of accurate knowledge, absorbed the attention of students. Then, as the whole scheme of human evolution became unveiled, to a considerable extent, it grew apparent that this knowledge shed such a light upon the means by which spiritual progress for each individual was to be obtained, that Occultism came to be regarded as a supreme rule of life, a guide to conduct. And, finally, many of us have perceived that it becomes a rule not merely of individual but of collective life; that the problems of politics and social organisation are only to be correctly solved when we have considered them in the light of occult teaching.

This idea was the inspiration of the periodical above named—*Broad Views*. It was described from the beginning as "the only periodical of its class frankly recognising the modern developments of occult science and their

bearings on the problems of private and public life." And the essays now republished have represented—as far as my own writing has been concerned—my effort to justify that conception of its purpose.

The subjects of these essays have been suggested by circumstances as they arose, and as the progress of public events may suggest, they will, I trust, be followed by others that may contribute to establish the position I have ventured to take up.

A. P. SINNETT.

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# THE DOCTRINE OF REINCARNATION

THE theory of evolution that seeks to account for the progress of the human soul by recognising each earth life as a link in a long chain of lives, instead of an isolated experience, has attracted a good deal of attention and not a little sympathy during the last twenty years. It has seemed to provide an answer to some riddles of the earth that were otherwise painfully bewildering. No one can turn the eye of imagination towards the seething masses of miserable, untaught, and criminal humanity without feeling that if each creature has but the one chance of securing salvation or ruining himself for ever, the inequalities of environment are deplorably unfair. We may take refuge in the thought that we did not make the world and are not responsible for its horrors. Or perhaps a good many of us, in spite of a faith formally professed, may feel imperfectly assured of a conscious existence on the other side of Woking, and so be of opinion that the one life resolves itself, at any rate, into all that is practically worth talking about. Meanwhile the variegated intellectual activity of our time affords scope for the development of new phases of religious thinking, coloured by the scientific method, and in this way the doctrine of reincarnation has found its way to favour, and has been fortified by collateral beliefs in regard to the unseen aspects of Nature around us, which must be taken into consideration by anyone who desires to understand the doctrine itself.

In dealing with these, I must ask the reader to remember that I am not here attempting to set forth the whole argument in favour of reincarnation, on which, for those who adopt it, the theory rests. To do this would expand the present statement to an excessive length; but the doctrine I wish to describe is frightfully caricatured unless the collateral ideas above referred to are taken into account.

And at all events there are, in the cultivated world, great multitudes of people by whom the actuality of vast regions of Nature behind the veil of matter is regarded as certain; to whom the old-established tenets of religion are not repugnant but merely incomplete; who feel that we may be on the brink of new developments of knowledge which at no distant period may bring us into conscious relationship with some phases of Nature hitherto thought to be in the region of the unknowable. I do not want to be guilty of the affectation of discussing the main idea I have at present in view, as though to me it were a matter of speculation or mere probability. But the actual conviction that a good many psychic students entertain to the effect that they have gone through various earth lives specifically known to them in the past; that many of their relationships in the current life are nothing less than ancient relationships re-established, and so on, are based on long years of experience connected with the possibilities of acquiring such knowledge. It is not easy to condense results thus obtained through half a lifetime of research, especially when that research has lain along unfamiliar roads, into a few pages. My present purpose, therefore, is simply to describe the doctrine of reincarnation, as it is held by those who have made it, and a multitude of inferences connected with human evolution which ramify from it, their special study. As talked about by people who have not made it such a study, it is often distorted out of all resemblance to its true shape. Even

subject to such distortions it has frequently been found attractive to the imagination, and especially valuable as reconciling the mind to the apparent injustice of the world's government, but it can only be fairly judged when set forth without misrepresentation and when explained in conjunction with the collateral doctrines which harmonise it with earlier conceptions of spiritual existence, and show it not merely logical and scientific in itself, but quite compatible with all essential principles of the Christian religion.

The clue to the accurate appreciation of the reincarnation idea will be found in the fundamental conception that a human soul is no more an instantaneous creation *ex nihilo* than the complicated organism of the human body. As far as the physical world is concerned, theologians, even of the most antiquated type, have seen fit to fall into line with the doctrine of evolution. Only at the first glance did this seem to dethrone the Creator. In a little while it was perceived that it merely threw light on the methods adopted by the Creator. Early mankind had jumped to certain conclusions on that point, and for a few moments, so to speak, when these were demonstrably proved to be wrong, the Church fancied its foundations were being shaken. That is now an old story, and Darwin has long since been made welcome in the pulpit. A time will assuredly come—for some pulpits it has come already—when the principles of evolution will be seen to apply as satisfactorily to the growth of the soul as to that of the body. The two processes have, in fact, been parallel. We might go back behind the earliest beginnings of anything that can be thought of as a human soul if we sought to picture the old process of the world's development in the mind, but at some stage of the great undertaking, let us assume that some given centre of consciousness has attained to the condition of being a human soul. Geological remains of what is commonly supposed

to be primitive man will hardly afford us examples of the primitive organism that sufficed to provide the very youngest souls with suitable vehicles of manifestation on the physical plane, but imagination will be sufficiently helped for the moment if we think of a black savage in the wilds of Australia, and realise the idea that the soul within him is not more advanced along the lines of soul evolution than his body along that line. The accepted view of human growth (as far as bodies are concerned) provides for an enormous procession of generations along which the experience of the race is reflected in its external constitution. Each generation of bodies is evanescent, but the next is a little improvement on the last, and so by degrees the race attains to civilisation. I am not wanting to imply that every remnant of savage races still lingering on earth will go through such a course of improvement, but the existing civilised races certainly sprang originally from races that were savage, and the growth of the bodies may be thought of as a continuous process, if we take account of the faculty inhering in each one of reproducing its kind plus a little improvement.

Now a moment's thought will show that it is not the body that accomplishes the little improvement each time, but the soul within. The consciousness of the man is gathering the experience of life. That enlargement of faculty makes a claim on the evolutionary law for a correspondingly improved organism. It is indeed difficult to reflect in language a correct idea of so delicate a process, for there is another influence at work. The souls coming into incarnation have, in their last lives, acquired something in the nature of capacity they did not possess before. They need a somewhat better vehicle of consciousness than they had last time, and that need is part of the claim on Nature of which I speak, but it is only a claim to which Nature responds by

means of the improved heredity engendered by successive generations on the physical plane.

The actual course of events—it is tedious to be always interrupting the explanation to repeat that it is the description of a belief, and simpler to present it as the elucidation of a natural law—the actual course of events is only luminous to the mind when we realise that, after quitting the body, the soul for a time inhabits other vehicles of consciousness on other planes of Nature. And the region of Nature in which the soul of the primitive savage enjoys a spiritual rest, appropriate to his place in evolution, is the same region in which the soul of the most advanced European enjoys his rest (and some of the rewards that may be due to him), but it responds to the characteristics of the soul in a way I will endeavour to explain later. Enough for the moment to say that the inter-incarnate life is in each case as rich and varied as the soul determines that it shall be, by the extent of its own advancement. On the highest levels, indeed, that inter-incarnate experience may touch, the undeveloped soul of the savage is barely conscious. Its growth has only just begun on the physical plane. It is there that by degrees the expansion of consciousness must be accomplished which fits it for vivid consciousness on the higher planes later on.

And as a consequence it will be seen that a very mild degree of moral responsibility attaches to the savage for the use he makes of his lives during the early stage of his progress through the ages. To some extent, no doubt, he does make a good or bad use, according to his lights, of the chances nature gives him, and to that extent, most assuredly, the great law of equilibrium will express itself in the conditions more or less desirable of each life to which he becomes destined. By overlooking or misunderstanding this law, people on the outskirts of the subject often make

nonsense of the whole system. In one shape or another the idea of reward and punishment enters into every scheme of thinking having to do with a future life, but for want of defined conceptions on the subject, the operations of Nature along those lines are apt to be misunderstood. The moral laws of the world are not so awkwardly adjusted that any man can incur an inappropriate penalty or come into possession of an inappropriate reward. Indeed, from an advanced point of view, we almost lose sight of the idea of reward and punishment. We come into touch with the more scientific law of moral equilibrium. The complexities of that law are so profound that its analogue on the physical plane—the law of the conservation of energy—is relatively simple. We do not in any true sense of the word understand why force is indestructible, but we know by experience that it is. We can convert one force into another, heat into chemical action, mechanical motion into electricity, and so on, but we do not know why none of those forces should ever die away without assuming some other of their Protean shapes. The situation is exactly paralleled on the moral plane, where the conservation of energy transforms wrong-doing into suffering by its own spiritual alchemy; happily, also, transforming noble, unselfish, generous action into one or other of the shapes that good may assume, sometimes simple happiness, sometimes opportunities to accomplish the glory of going on, bound in their turn to lead at later periods to results (to say rewards would seem ignominious) of corresponding dignity.

Anyhow, that is the way the great law of "Karma," as it is sometimes called, actually operates. And thought will show that while there are very few claims made upon it one way or the other by the early races of savage humanity, the complexities of its operation in the case of advanced souls in highly civilised life become enormous. Every life passed

in the midst of the complex temptations of modern society loads the soul with karmic forces, both for good and evil, but the point that has been missed by all who had not the clue to the truth afforded by the doctrine of reincarnation—in their speculations as to the consequences to the soul of its good or evil deeds—was necessarily missed in the absence of that clue. Acts of either kind, however specifically related to life on earth, were supposed to meet their reward or penalty under conditions of immaterial existence. Or, indeed, it was supposed that for the sake of considerations lying outside the relations of the soul in question with the moral law, many of the evil deeds might be forgiven, and the soul be as well off, after all, as though such deeds had never been performed. From the point of view of the doctrine now under discussion, the idea of forgiveness is no less foreign to the methods of Nature than the idea, for example, of forgiving a crystal of chlorate of potash for the consequences of coming in contact with sulphuric acid. But, first of all, implacability equally foreign to those methods, and equally foreign again is the idea of imposing on a soul tainted with the consequences of misdoing on the physical plane, a penalty out of proportion to the offence on some spiritual plane of existence. The law of the conservation of energy on the moral plane adapts its action with infallible exactitude to the character and conditions of the disturbance of its equilibrium that may have taken place. The penalties, so to speak, of any misdoing on the physical plane during life await the soul on its return to physical life, and, as regards the vast majority of human entities at the present stage of our evolution, they are incapable of acts for which any appropriate penalty could follow them on to the spiritual plane. There they have their rest, and such happiness, even as may be appropriate to the extent of their spiritual development, while their

physical plane misdoing determines the character of the environment in the midst of which they will 'ultimately return to physical existence.

Here it may be just worth while to affirm definitely, what any moderately intelligent student of the reincarnation doctrine would take for granted, that it does *not* proclaim the return of human souls under any conditions in animal bodies. This preposterous conception seems to have been thrown out at early stages of the world's history to frighten the children—as theologians invented the idea of hell-fire for the same purpose at a later date. Or some Eastern writers, in the beginning, may have adopted that symbol as implying that successive births might become more and more degraded if the entities concerned led, time after time, more and more evil lives. Masses of ignorant people in the East to this day, indeed, for that matter, actually do believe in the transmigration of human souls into animal bodies, but I am not concerned at present with discussing the foolishness of popular beliefs in the East or West. No modern student of the law of reincarnation conceives for a moment that the kingdoms of Nature are entangled in this ridiculous way. The evolution of spiritual consciousness has, indeed, proceeded by gradual degrees through all the kingdoms, and the individualised souls of human beings emerged, once upon a time, from the less individualised manifestations of life that constitute the animal world. But, once human, the fully individualised soul can never relapse from that condition. It may waver in its progress through the ages between widely varying conditions of welfare. That is the consequence of its own action at each step of the process, but, however evil its activity in life, human fates may be amply distressing enough to restore the balance of disturbed forces. All serious writers on this subject have again and again emphasised the

point that I am now making. It has been explained with all possible emphasis that the notion of transmigration into animal bodies was merely one of the caricatures to which the reincarnation doctrine has been subject, but still, critics from whom one might have expected more intelligence, continue to object that it is absurd to think of a man becoming a snake or a pig! Undoubtedly that would be absurd, but the doctrine of reincarnation is not responsible for the absurdity.

The working of the law can only be clearly understood in the light of a correct comprehension of the experiences through which the soul passes after the completion of each physical life. From the ordinary point of view, all that is wrapped in complete obscurity, but the great body of teaching out of which the doctrine of reincarnation emerges in its present scientific shape deals also with phases of human consciousness that are held to be within the range of investigation by persons gifted with faculties, rare, no doubt, per million of the population, but not so very scarce after all in the aggregate. At all events, the course of successive lives can only be understood by accepting, at least as a hypothesis, the explanation reincarnationists give of the intervening phases of existence, and as the one belief, that which has to do with the return to the physical plane, is inseparably blended with the other—which has to do with the superphysical conditions of life—that also must be set forth to make the whole idea intelligible. To simplify the task, I put the exposition in the form of a straightforward statement, instead of saying every moment, reincarnationists believe this, and reincarnationists believe that.

The experiences that come on first when a human soul is emancipated from the prison of the flesh are not of a very exalted order. As consciousness fades from the physical vehicle, it carries with it the finer sheath of astral matter

which has interpenetrated the coarser physical vehicle during life, and in this ethereal but still quite material envelope it exists for a time in the region commonly called the astral plane, so called not because it has any connection with the stars, but simply because that term has been employed to denote the condition of Nature in question by students of super-physical mystery for many hundred years, and it is inconvenient now to abandon the word. On the astral plane the soul, in a vehicle of consciousness which is insusceptible to heat or cold, incapable of fatigue, subject to no waste, and, therefore, superior to the necessity of taking food, continues an existence for a variable period which in many of its aspects is so like the life just abandoned that uninstructed people who pass over, constantly find it impossible to believe that they are what is called "dead." But that state of things, though, as it grows familiar, and as the field of view is enlarged, it may be agreeable enough, and may be associated with the renewal of friendships and affections interrupted for a time by death, is not the state of things that corresponds to the Heaven of religious teaching. Occult views of the after-states do not by any means abolish Heaven, but few persons are really quite ready for that exalted condition immediately they leave the earth life. Only some are so wholly absorbed by thought and emotion of a truly spiritual order that they slip through the intermediate condition unconsciously. And by thought and emotion of a spiritual order, I do not mean merely religious fervour. That, when the feeling is not too much overladen with attachment to external form and ceremony, may carry a soul swiftly over the intermediate period, but in truth, real unselfish love directed towards other companion souls of the great human family, quite irrespective of devotion directed towards divine ideals, is a spiritual emotion of transcendent force, carrying the departed soul after a very brief interval

to the region or subjective state in which all such emotion blossoms into unimaginable perfection. In that state, moreover, Nature is infinitely responsive to all the loftier aspirations and desires of the mind, so that all its abortive efforts during life, pointing to the acquisition of knowledge, meet with an entirely complete and satisfactory fulfilment. Meanwhile, nothing that has ever been said from the religious point of view concerning the blissful condition of the soul in Heaven involves any exaggeration. On the contrary, the basic fact connected with existence on the plane of Nature corresponding to the Heaven of theology is bliss, absolute, complete, and unalloyed. Always subject to this qualification, be it remembered, that the capacity of different souls for the sensation of happiness varies almost as greatly as their capacity for appreciating knowledge.

But the methods of Nature provide for all cases, not merely for those of the spiritual aristocracy. How are we to think of the condition in Heaven of, let us say, a drunken coal-heaver, whose earth life has been anything but meritorious? He is probably to begin with a very young member of the human family, to whom but little has yet been given, and from whom but little will be yet expected, if we may for a moment dramatise the situation without forgetting that the results are all worked out and fall into their places by virtue of infinitely elastic and all-embracing moral laws which cover all possible cases. The drunken coal-heaver, of course, has his consciousness so deeply involved in material existence that the intermediate state of what may be thought of as semi-material existence is for him enormously prolonged. But even in such a man's life there may have been some little gleams of a spiritual feeling, something resembling love for a woman or a child. From such a little seed, or rather round such a little nucleus, when in the progress perhaps of ages the physical life cravings

have worn themselves out, a relatively faint capacity for existence on the spiritual plane may be developed. And then such a man, even, has his share of the purer condition of consciousness and of happiness to the extent that his undeveloped nature renders the higher form of happiness possible. He is in presence of conditions which, if he knew how to avail himself of them, would be as responsive in his case as in that of the warm-hearted philanthropist, the noble-minded woman representing the ideal perfection of wife and motherhood, the really devoted lover, the really devout worshipper of Divinity, whatever concrete aspect that may assume in his mind. But he has only room in his consciousness for one little millionth of the harmonies around him. For the rest, for him, *it* is as though they were not. But he is taking in all the time just as much happiness as he can absorb, and is wholly unaware that there are realms beyond his horizon.

Any accurate appreciation of the condition of things I have been endeavouring to depict will show how very far the reincarnation doctrine is from doing away with Heaven, one of the first vague objections raised by people who do not understand it properly. It only does away with the profoundly unphilosophical idea that the moral forces engendered during a brief earth life of a few score years at best can give rise to an infinity of consequence. The periods of time spent in the real Heaven I have described are so protracted that early teaching, addressed to a world not yet ripe to think with scientific exactitude, may well be excused for having treated them as infinite to all intents and purposes. For the average period between earth lives ranges between 1500 and 2000 years. So ample is the provision Nature makes for rest after the struggle of material existence, of which each of us is in need! There are many circumstances which in individual cases may expand

or curtail the period of spiritual rest, but it is of the foremost importance to realise that the reincarnation doctrine, as affecting mankind at large, involves no idea of a hurried return to earth that would entangle relationships in a manner repugnant to imagination. In two thousand years, even old acquaintances, perhaps, returning to the earth life together, have lost touch with the specific relationships of their last visit. If they are united in bonds of affection, those indeed spontaneously re-assert themselves, and so also with our antipathies and enmities. They also re-assert themselves, for the Heaven period over, the soul is back again in the midst of the sin and sorrow, as well as of the love and progress of the former time. And now comes the inevitable reaping of what was sown in the last life, whether the crop be a pleasant harvest of wholesome enjoyment or a dismal fruition of evil doing in the past.

Of all the silly phrases that ignorance has ever coined there is none sillier than "the accident of birth." Birth is no more an accident than the delivery of a letter by the postman at the address on the envelope. I could—for occult research has penetrated very deeply into the methods of Nature in respect to the course of human evolution—say a great deal about the mechanism of the law which guides re-birth, but that would involve too protracted a digression. Enough for the moment to insist unreservedly on this idea as one of the fundamental principles of re-incarnation, that the environment into which each soul as it comes into earth life is thrown is the nearest approximation that the law can provide to a mathematically accurate expression of the soul's desert. I say approximation, because in these days souls are burdened or possessed of such complicated volumes of "karma" that no one life can possibly express them all. Several lives may be tinctured with the action, good or bad, of some lives of great activity in the past.

And then before that elaborate account is adjusted the soul concerned will undoubtedly have been adding both to the debit and the credit side, so there is never a moment, or very rarely with entities of our stage in evolution, when the environment of a life clears off the old account entirely.

Meanwhile be it understood that whatever the environment making for pleasure or suffering may be, the condition of advancement of the Ego, his place on the scale of evolution, his acquired intellectual capacity and his sympathy or want of sympathy with moral ideas, is a permanent fact in his nature that environment does not alter. Within limits he may be raised up or cast down in the world. Station in society is, of course, a very important feature in the soul's environment, and is by no means left to chance, but it would be unusual for an entity to be tossed wildly up and down in the world. Those doing its rougher work at present are for the most part its younger children, and of that sort of work at some time in the past we have most of us had our share, but still there are karmic influences that will operate both ways to exalt or depress condition as compared with the station of the soul in the previous life, and for those who can trace the past lives of their own series, or of others, the effects of that sort of change are very striking.

More important, however, to a correct view of the whole subject than further detail in that direction is the great principle that people do not come into incarnation singly, spasmodically, or alone, but in company always with many whom they have been associated with in former lives. There is nothing in the least degree to be regarded as surprising in such concurrent reincarnations. By the hypothesis all the persons concerned died from the last life about the same time. They have spent about the same time on the planes of spiritual rest and happiness, where,

be it remembered, if they are attached to one another there has been no real separation, and they wear out the forces that keep them on the spiritual plane at about the same rate, side by side. They are ready to resume work on the physical plane at the same time, and they are tied together by the strong bonds of attachment, or (for we must never overlook the evil side of human relationships) by the equally strong bonds of enmity. The man who has bitterly wronged another in one life will be mixed up with his affairs again in the next, and it may be that he will in turn become the sufferer ; but to dwell on that possibility would be to suggest a very wooden, inelastic idea of the karmic law. There are endless varieties in the way bad karma may work itself out, and it by no means follows that the victim of wrong-doing in one life is by any pressure of the law bound to revenge himself in the next. Quite the contrary ; he merely keeps up the disturbed equilibrium of the law if he does so, and perpetuates the trouble through future ages. The forgiveness of sins may not be possible in the sense of causing past facts not to have taken place, but it is a very magnificent possibility as regards the disturbance of equilibrium between any two members of the human family. Let the wronged personage forego his vengeance, and "I will repay, saith the Lord." The truthfulness of many phrases in Scripture, when they are properly understood in the light of spiritual science, is a source of much interest and gratification to the occult student.

Besides the common delusion that the doctrine of reincarnation does away with Heaven, the familiar objection next to be dealt with arises from the fact that (most) people do not remember their past lives, and the equally familiar answer from the student's point of view is that some of them do. If the account just given of the normal course followed by the soul between lives is properly appreciated,

it will be obvious that specific memories of each life in turn fade from the consciousness of the soul before it is ready for another period of physical activity. That readiness, in fact, is expressed by the final obliteration from the consciousness of all detail concerning the last life. As long as its details interest the Ego, the spiritual condition is maintained. But while in this way it is obvious that the normal rule for people at this stage of evolution must be forgetfulness of past lives, the growth and further evolution of their higher vehicles of consciousness will in time provide them with resources by means of which they may recover any past memories that they may desire to recover. Having more or less completely digested Darwinian teaching in regard to the past, it ought not to be very difficult for us to forecast the possibilities of evolution in the future to the extent of realising that great expansions of faculty still await humanity. These will really be especially associated with the further development of the higher vehicles, the more than ethereal bodies in which the soul exists on the higher planes, and which, be it remembered, are already associated with the body during physical life. For most people the development of these higher vehicles is by no means so far advanced as that of the physical organism. Nature does not build her structures from the top downwards, any more than a physical plane architect would do this. The ground floor has to be built, as far as its main walls are concerned at all events, before the upper floors are constructed, and in the vast processes of evolution the same simple rule holds good. It is not until the consciousness is fairly well developed on the plane of earth life that it begins to work freely in its higher "bodies." That is not inconsistent with what I have said concerning the vivid consciousness of happiness in the inter-incarnate periods. That vivid consciousness for all ordinary people is, as I

have endeavoured to explain, a glorification of all that was best in the physical life just spent. It does not mean that the Ego is in a position to *work* with all the possibilities of the spiritual plane on which he enjoys his appropriate rest. But as the evolution of the spiritual body proceeds, that process depending itself on the activities of the soul in incarnation, it becomes more and more able to *live* on the spiritual plane, not merely to bask for a time in its sunshine. And as this power expands, so does the soul carry back into the earth life next in order, a capacity during that life of being conscious in its spiritual body as well as in its physical body. Now on the spiritual plane, for those in tune with its loftier possibilities, desire for knowledge is equivalent to its instant possession. So when any Ego, or soul, is advanced in spiritual growth a little beyond the stage that has been generally attained at present by the most developed representatives of ordinary humanity, it finds itself in a position to transfer its consciousness at will from the one plane to the other without going through the formality of "dying." And if it does that with the desire of recovering recollection of any past life, it will recover that recollection with a degree of amplitude and precision that no ordinary memory even faintly suggests.

Thus already, for some souls are very much further advanced along the line of spiritual evolution than others, I know people who not alone remember their past lives, but are in a position, if it were worth while, to write a complete diary of every day of those past lives. For all persons the faculty in due course of time will come, but its coming may be greatly hastened as compared with the normal progress of the majority, for them a question perhaps, not of centuries, but of a long series of lives, each spaced out in time according to the rules governing reincarnation.

In connection with this matter of remembering the past,

there are many other points of interest to be noted. So variegated are the possibilities of evolution that it may happen to some people to have developed their higher vehicles very considerably, sufficiently to command the possibilities of memory just referred to, and many other grander possibilities as well, without having evolved a physical organism capable of responding to their own consciousness in the higher vehicles. That is a question of physical plane karma. Just as the environment of a life is that which, whether it is agreeable, or the reverse, the entity concerned has earned for himself by former physical plane activities, so the faculties of the body are the product of his own action in a former life. That is the case with all its faculties. If a man is an ardent musician in one life, he will have a body suited to apprehend and express musical ideas in his next life. So with the other varieties of art, and so also with capacity to deal with the problems of science. The great musician or man of science is not the product of the infinitesimal activities he may engage in between birth and maturity. He is the product of many lives of persistent effort along the line of his speciality. And the peculiar faculties of brain that make for what is called the psychic temperament—the capacity of translating to the waking physical consciousness the impressions or experiences gone through on higher planes while the soul is temporarily in sleep or trance, away from the physical body—are in their turn the product of efforts in that direction in former lives. In reference to the bodily instrument we acquire each time we come into incarnation, Nature gives us—to put the idea into that crude fashion—what we want to have if we do not put impediments in her way by generating bad karma, which interferes with the fruition of our wishes. But Nature can only rearrange our affairs in respect of such desires at each fresh departure:

at the beginning, that is to say, of each fresh life. If last time all our ambitions were bent on some purely mundane object, we are fitted out in the next life accordingly, and then it is too late to change our minds and ask Nature to give us a body that would express some wholly different aspiration. In other words, people who are born quite without the faculties of psychic perception, will very rarely be able to acquire them by effort, but if they really learn to want them, they will have them next time.

So now that I have fairly well defined the doctrine of reincarnation as understood by those who believe in it—for many of whom, of course, it is no "theory" at all, but a living fact of consciousness—only one other important suggestion need be made to those for whom as yet it is only a theory. At all events, it is a theory which has the merit of bringing the terrible conditions of life all around us into harmony with the idea of ultimate moral and intellectual progress for all. The laws by which that progress is regulated may, like many other laws of Nature, bring about suffering in individual cases for a time, but when we realise that in each individual case suffering is no more than a transient experience, itself the product of causes that have either been set up by the soul concerned or constitute some among the earlier influences that have to be brought to bear on it in order to promote its ultimate evolution, the grievous riddle of the earth at all events assumes a new aspect which robs it of much of its horror. That thought will not operate with anyone who understands the law aright, to render him in the minutest degree less anxious than before to do his best, whatever that may be, to mitigate the suffering of others less advanced than himself. On the contrary, it will stimulate every such effort in a way no mere philanthropic sympathy could stimulate it, because for each reincarnating soul there is no

surer road to happiness than eager desire to promote the happiness of others, no surer method of bringing suffering on oneself than the careless neglect of opportunities that may be afforded for softening the pressure of the karmic law on others. But that is not the thought on which any occult student would dwell most earnestly, because the very essence of the higher morality which a comprehension of the whole system of evolution engenders is the futility of all action designed with a self-regarding motive. The great law is working towards results which the clearest view of the future but dimly foreshadows; but we can see vistas of progress before the human race of such a kind that the progress so far accomplished since the earliest savage condition is a mere first step in the direction along which that progress lies. The onward movement is not to be accomplished by lazily drifting with the current of growth towards higher spheres of being. This world is the appointed arena of all activity which conduces to the grand purpose. Existence in brighter spheres can only be the harvest of the soul's cultivation here, and, but for the methods of Nature which bring back each soul again and again to the more or less painful arena of struggle, it would be self-condemned for ever to remain in a state which, by comparison with the potentialities of its nature, would be like that of the infant in arms as compared with the mature man. This physical world is for the human family, not merely the school in which we are trained more or less severely for higher destinies. That view is apt to drift people into thinking of the whole evolutionary process as one in which the entities concerned are helpless puppets in the hands of an arbitrary master. Surely the familiar teaching which, for so many, unfortunately is little more than a meaningless form of words—to the effect that Divinity is immanent in man—should suggest a loftier view of the

truth. The whole stupendous aggregation of moral law in the midst of which we exist, but faintly suggested by the marvellous complexity of the laws that govern physical matter, is the Divine power which affords to every item of its diffused essence the boundless opportunities this world provides for developing the Divine principle. A time will come for all sooner or later when that principle will have been evolved, and when, therefore, further return to the sphere of work, struggle, and progress is no longer needful. Then, for such exalted beings, the law of reincarnation will have accomplished its purpose, and in modes of existence that ordinary human imagination at present is incapable of figuring in the mind, the possibilities of even further progress will somehow become manifest. But, with such speculations as that, it is needless to entangle our attempts to comprehend the working of the great evolutionary principle which controls this stage of our development. For vast ranges of time to come, that development can only go on in the sphere of existence to which we are at present bound, from which from time to time we escape to enjoy protracted periods of rest, but from which we are only separated in delusive imagination during such periods. Perhaps, for many of us, life after life at this stage of our career may be spent without much visible advantage, but if so, that is our own fault. All that is needed now to make the progress perceptible, or even rapid, is that our own intelligent effort should unite its influence with those of the natural evolutionary tendency. Then the final purpose of the law of reincarnation will be vindicated, and the soul, enlightened by knowledge, will be enabled eventually to triumph even over that law, and to blend itself in a consciousness which yet loses nothing of the past, with the Almighty Power by Whom the methods of its earlier growth have been designed.

# THE MEMORY OF NATURE

STUDENTS concerned with the study of that profoundly interesting body of natural laws governing the phenomena which superphysical science is engaged in investigating, find themselves, as time goes on, in presence of an increasing difficulty when they wish to lay before the world at large the results of their researches. Few departments of science have progressed more, within the last few years, than that which deals with mysteries hitherto called occult, but nothing has been known of its gradual development by people absorbed in the more familiar avocations of life, and serious occult inquiry has unfortunately been divided from these by a margin or fringe of more or less absurd frivolity, the character of which has entirely veiled from public view the real nature of the operations in the background. The mere frivolities of occultism are of themselves sufficiently entertaining to attract a good deal of attention. A change of feeling in reference to the whole subject, which has gone further than even those influenced by it may be fully aware, has induced a great many people to engage themselves with more or less zeal in this frivolity; but the broad result of all this is that thinkers of the ordinary type imagine that all devotees of occult inquiry part company, at the outset of their various pursuits, with the cool, balanced judgment required for the conduct of any new research, and pursue the notions with which they are

possessed under the influence of boundless credulity, and in disregard of the conclusions reached by sedate students of Nature who have worked, during the progress of natural science, with continual and cautious reference to knowledge accumulated by their predecessors. The truth of the matter is that the genuine achievements of occult investigation during the last dozen years have been accomplished with as much prudence, care, and balanced judgment as those which have had to do, during the same period, with the advance made in chemical or electrical science, and the real reason why so wide a gulf still divides the knowledge that has thus been acquired from that possessed by the world at large, is to be found in the fact that serious occult investigation can only be conducted by methods which differ in some important respects from those by which purely physical investigation has hitherto been carried on.

Clearly it is possible to push forward knowledge in either one of two very different ways. We may attach ourselves to the block of knowledge already acquired, and add to it particle by particle, as the coral insects construct their islands. We may, on the other hand, if there seems adequate justification for attempting that method, start from the nucleus of an entirely new hypothesis, established, so to speak, far on in advance of existing knowledge in the ocean of the unknown and uncertain, and constantly keeping in mind at the outset of such new work that the nucleus represents hypothesis and not ascertained fact, surround it, so to speak, by all the inferences by which its actuality can be tested, expanding the structure downwards as well as upwards, until at last it may come into communication with existing knowledge, be recognised then as in continuous relations with this, and thus finally acquire as definite a right to be regarded as a part of the whole structure as though it had been thrown out in the first instance by the old-

fashioned method. In the last half dozen years serious occult inquiry has been carried on in the manner just described, as also to some limited extent in accordance with the older method of building from original foundations. That older method has been mainly represented by the activities of the society devoted to psychical research, the other has been adopted by students encouraged to frame their first hypotheses by bolder speculation based upon abnormal experience. Speaking from the point of view of the latter school, it appears to me that the accretions of previously existing knowledge accomplished by means of the old-fashioned method have been extremely insignificant compared to those which have been developed by the other. It appears to me also that a great many results acquired by the newer method are now fairly in touch with the main body of previously familiar knowledge, and can thus be rendered intelligible to a larger audience than that in tune from the outset with the newer system. I propose to select from the results attained a coherent group of conclusions concerning some of the great laws of Nature which could only have been developed from previously existing knowledge after protracted delay.

The far-sighted speculations that have given rise to the results in question turned round experiences—not always of a very impressive or dignified character in themselves, but none the less suggestive for people who could discern underlying principles—acquired in connection with the strange faculty by virtue of which some persons of abnormal gifts have, from time to time, been able to recognise events at a distance, to read writing set before them when they have been effectually blindfolded, and to divine by some unintelligible method the pathological condition of people suffering from disease without using any of the resources of ordinary medical diagnosis. All these faculties have been

comprehensively described as Clairvoyance, and have lain so far beyond the ordinary range of experience, and have been at first so entirely unattended by any intelligible explanations, that most people advancing cautiously along the beaten paths of science have treated the whole body of phenomena concerned with contemptuous neglect, convinced, in spite of whatever testimony seemed to support the stories told, that no condition of things they failed to apprehend could possibly exist. The facts nevertheless accumulated by even the early students of Clairvoyance remained a body of facts no less absolute in their character as such than the observations of astronomy, even though the majority of mankind have chosen to disregard them. Dr Esdaile, himself a patient and laborious practitioner of curative mesmerism, whose results at Calcutta are attested by floods of contemporary evidence, speaks of the researches in Clairvoyance conducted by the French mesmerist, Dr Pétitin, as conclusively establishing the reality of Clairvoyance as a fact in Nature; while later on Dr Gregory accumulated a volume of evidence on the subject, the result mainly of his own, but also to a considerable degree of independent contemporary observation, compared to which Dr Pétitin's cases were the mere first drops of the thunderstorm. At the present day people who speak of Clairvoyance as though the whole thing were a superstition at variance with the enlarged wisdom represented by modern physical science, are simply exhibiting ignorance of the work done in this department very ludicrous from the point of view of those of us who in the present day, in connection with our own further studies, have come to be as familiar with the fact of Clairvoyance as with the process of conveying thought by means of the telegraph or the penny post.

One of the circumstances under which Clairvoyance of the spasmodic, untrained kind is occasionally manifest

passes with students familiar with the subject under the name of psychometry. The circumstances under which this variety of the gift in question is most often manifested are these:—Certain persons by feeling a piece of writing, a letter or whatever it may be, without reading or paying the least attention to its contents, will derive impressions concerning the writer, occasionally consisting of mere broad feeling as to his character and temperament, sometimes running into minute detail as to the circumstances under which the writing in question was produced. I myself, in testing the capacity of a friend along these peculiar lines of clairvoyant perception, have taken up a bundle of miscellaneous letters just as they lay in the drawer of a writing-table, and have given them one by one to the sensitive, who has told me something concerning each writer more or less important, but always with accuracy so far as it went, in fifteen or twenty cases in succession.

This experiment, of course, is one of an elementary order. We approach achievements really of the same nature, but apparently more complicated, when we deal with natural objects. The effect of these in the case of the highly gifted psychometrist is to put his consciousness in touch with previous conditions of Nature associated with the object he holds. To illustrate what I mean, let me describe a case in point. I have long been in the habit, when travelling abroad, of picking up pebbles or chipping bits of old walls to use when opportunity should serve as objects for psychometric experiments. I gave one such fragment of stone on one occasion to a psychometrist, and within ten minutes she had quite accurately described to me the leading characteristics of a very peculiarly configured island off the coast of Norway where I had picked up the stone some years previously. Enthusiasts for the telepathic idea will here suggest that I knew the characteristics of the place

all the time, and that my friend obtained her impressions from my mind. It is a great step in advance of commonplace thinking to reach a comprehension of telepathy as a fact in Nature, no less distinctly established as such than the circulation of the blood, but many people who have gone so far are inclined to pause in their progress and assign all manner of psychic phenomena to telepathy with a persistence that is not a little unreasonable in the estimation of those who are familiar with other laws. To cover the telepathic suggestion in this case, however, I will give another instance of psychometry within my own experience. I gave on one occasion to a psychometrist a jade ring which I had myself bought in China, expecting to hear a description of the place where I procured it. Instead of this I received an account of a vision concerned entirely with wild mountain scenery with which I myself was totally unacquainted. Some time afterwards I ascertained that the jade so commonly used for ornamental purposes in China comes originally from the huge mountain ranges between East Turkestan and Tibet, and in this case the original "magnetism" of the stone had carried back the clairvoyant perceptions of my sensitive to the very region from which it had been quarried. Here it will be seen that there was no room for the telepathic hypothesis. And let me add, having just for the first time in this essay used the term "magnetism," that I apologise for it as very inappropriate to the mysterious currents of influence that continue to flow between objects and the places from which they have come. It is a word only used by occultists for want of a better, and embodies no suggestion that the magnetism in question is identical with that of the lodestone and its offspring.

The two experiments last described are still in the nature of elementary attempts. When the faculty employed is

found in higher perfection, it will enable us to trace back the history of any given place or building along a connected series of retrospective visions which may apparently extend back to infinity without exhibiting the slightest indication of a tendency to fade. I have thus, with adequate help, been enabled to look back to the actual construction of Stonehenge, and in other investigations of a similar character have dealt with problems of remote history of an even more interesting kind; but with these for the moment it is not my purpose to deal. I am concerned simply with the principle involved in all such investigations, and, in order to consider that more systematically, we must turn aside for a moment into other paths of occult research, and examine, as far as we are able, the nature of that consciousness on which it is possible to impress either views of the present or visions of the past.

For the occult student, no fact connected with human consciousness is more certain than the fact that it does not depend upon its embodiment within the physical framework of a human being. Of course, to establish this fundamental truth to the satisfaction of those who are quite outside the researches which have to do with it would involve very long dissertations on that branch of the subject alone, and the record of much laborious experiment. But summing up the knowledge obtained by students along these lines for the purpose of the explanation more especially in hand, it may be enough to say that it is a common experience for people of adequately developed psychic faculty to meet one another in vehicles of consciousness belonging to a finer order of materiality than that of which physical bodies are composed, when, as far as their physical bodies are concerned, these are far apart or even asleep in different parts of the world. The intercourse on that other plane of Nature with which they are then concerned will be fully

remembered by both in the waking state, and may be the subject of subsequent verification.

The bearing of such experience on the psychometric mystery has to do with the manner in which it shows that the consciousness which perceives or remembers is something quite independent of the physical brain, which in the waking state of its embodiment in flesh is undoubtedly the vehicle of its perception or remembrance, as much the vehicle as the piano when played upon is the instrument which produces the music although the conception of that music has been a state of consciousness in the player's mind before the keyboard was touched. In this way one may remark parenthetically that all the laborious imaginings of physiologists who have endeavoured to assign memory to molecular changes going on in the brain whenever an impression is received may be cast completely aside on the scrap-heap of obsolete delusions. There is no more molecular change in the human brain after it has been used to excite a sensation or impression on the consciousness associated with it for the moment than there is a permanent change in the strings of a piano because some definite chord has been struck.

One other conception concerning consciousness must be recognised in order to bring us within range of anything resembling an explanation of psychometry. A psychic of adequate development can, as I have just asserted, bring back into the waking state a memory of experiences enjoyed on a higher plane of Nature in appropriate vehicles of consciousness; but, in truth, all moderately advanced human beings in the vanguard of evolution at present do this in a greater or less degree without fully realising what they are about. Amongst quite ordinary people their best and loftiest thoughts and impulses may really be a reflection, in this way, of impressions gathered from higher planes of

Nature, and in the case of the ordinary psychometrist we have an example of faculties standing mid-way between those of quite ordinary people and those of occult students so far advanced as to be able to understand the nature of their own higher activities. The mere psychometrist feels as if the object he touches linked him in some way with a specific vision. The more advanced psychic will realise that that vision is only part of a series so extensive that it may not inappropriately be called "the memory of Nature."

For all of us an analysis of memory is a hopeless undertaking. Occult research goes no further than to show that it is a function of consciousness, and that consciousness itself, as we are in the habit of contemplating it, is, as it were, the lower end of a fibre, the upper end of which is so completely immersed in that divine all-comprehensive consciousness on which the very existence of the whole scheme of creation depends that nothing could be more futile than for us at present to attempt a definition of its attributes. But without presuming to grapple with metaphysical problems that can only, if handled at all, throw light upon the impotence of embodied thinking, it is enough to recognise that, as we ascend higher and higher along that fibre of which I speak, itself, of course, a mere allegorical suggestion, we undoubtedly enlarge our lateral range of consciousness. That is to say, at the extreme tip of the fibre, or in our embodied waking state, consciousness is concentrated within the tip; higher up, impressions flow in, as it were, from all sides; and at a certain degree of elevation this inflow is tantamount to a consciousness which extends over all transactions which have had to do with the development of the evolutionary scheme to which that fibre belongs. Memory, in this way, as we commonly use the expression, meaning thereby the recollection possible at the extreme tip of the fibre, relates merely to those impressions which

have actually been acquired by consciousness within those limitations. In the ordinary language of commonplace thinking, no one would expect to remember more than he has once known or perceived; but the memory of the single, individualised, embodied consciousness is a memory as minute in reference to the memory of Nature, of which it is really a part, as the single individual himself is minute compared with the whole world. There is a condition to which it is possible for human consciousness to ascend, at which memory may relate to anything that has ever transpired within the world to which that ray of consciousness belongs.

No one who appreciates in the slightest degree the significance of this dazzling thought can fail to realise something of the horizon it opens out before the mind. Half a century ago, patient Dr Gregory, groping along the path of research with no better light than that afforded by pre-existing knowledge of the common-place order, perceived, from what he saw of Clairvoyance, that it foreshadowed a mighty possibility which he sketched in something like prophetic language. If this faculty should be capable of any very great development, it would put us, he saw, in possession of means for investigating the past history of the world, beside which literary records would sink into insignificance. No doubt to those who are steeped in materialistic habits of thought, nothing as yet will seem trustworthy as a method of historical investigation except the written record, or the equally tangible testimony of ancient monuments; but with those who have only gone a little way in the practical use of the higher faculties, this habit of mind is entirely out of date. The faculty, indeed, in the case of people who have only advanced a little way towards its perfection may often be itself untrustworthy. Evidence concerning the past which may be collected from

the imperfectly trained observer must be abundantly verified by collateral observation of an independent character before it would command the respect of any cautious inquirer. But this much we have clearly ascertained; the nature of the record itself, whatever that may be, which constitutes Nature's memory, correctly seen, is infallible. It is the impress on a medium which cannot lie, of a record corresponding with the fact, self-recorded more rigorously than the photographic image by its object. The picture "in the astral light," to use a technical expression, may be seen through many distorted media, just as a scene of Nature herself may be viewed through corrugated glass, but the view is not corrugated. So with the picture in astral light; it is unchangeably defined with faultless accuracy, and the circumstances which at one time may obscure the perceptions of one observer will be cleared away for another, and we already know that there is a point of view from which the imperishable records can be observed, from which, if the observer can attain that point of view, no possibility of distortion or error threatens him with the smallest mistake.

Of course, the conception we are dealing with is one which bewilders the imagination. If it is possible to evoke from the memory of Nature the aspect of any single room, or of any one group of people there assembled at some former time, it is obviously necessary to assume that every room in every house in the world is contributing in the same way to the immeasurable store of records. That every landscape has impressed its changing features, as the seasons revolved, on the same imperishable pages; that there has never been a moment of time since the world began in connection with which the memory of the conditions prevailing at that moment has been blotted out of existence. The finite human understanding is so little able to grasp a condition of things like this, that for a long

time to come the Philistine thinker will take refuge in simple incredulity. The only reply to such incredulity which it is necessary to make is, that the repudiation of any conjecture concerning Nature, not to speak of observations built on facts, merely because conjecture assumes Nature to be very complicated, is to exhibit a Bœotian state of mind in reference to many phenomena with which we are daily in contact. Take the methods by which the contents of any single room are made perceptible to the vision or senses of persons within it: by the vibrations of ether. What do these vibrations really signify? From every point of matter within the room, however variegated its contents, a sphere of vibration must be extending in all directions. Each point can be seen from any part of the room equally well by different observers, and yet every point is crossed by the vibrations emitted from every other point of matter within the room. The complexity of such vibrations is something in itself no less calculated to loosen the reason of anyone who attempts to follow out the whole process in imagination than the attempt to grasp infinity, whether of time or space; and none of these vibrations, of all the million million spheres of such which every room contains, is alike in its character, for they represent, besides the objective point from which they emanate, the infinite varieties of colour and intensities of light with which these points may have to do. It would be easy to derive from chemical science, for people familiar with that line of thought, illustrations concerning the resources of Nature for dealing with complexity which are no less effective than that which I have just put forward. Take the case of a reaction between two solutions, of different solids. Each molecule in each of these solutions is something, the construction of which from the point of view of ordinary science can but be dimly conjectured, but which, at all

events, is a piece of mechanism of highly elaborate structure within dimensions which great mathematical authority declared to bear about the same relation to a drop of water as that which a cricket ball bears to the earth. In little more than an instant of time, when the two solutions are mingled, every molecule in the mixture has been entirely reconstructed, every molecule, remember, of a number of which, if the mixture consists of less liquid than might be contained in a common tumbler, would be represented by a row of ciphers stretching across this page. Only by those who ponder on the meaning of astronomical distances, and on the equally appalling significance of the infinitely little, will the power of Nature to grapple with complexity be reverently appreciated.

What, then, lies before mankind as the ultimate possibility of the state of things concerning the memory of Nature of which modern occult research has now definite assurance? Clearly it is obvious that no one who realises the possibility of inquiring into the knowledge of the past, by putting himself into relation with the memory of Nature, will be content with the mere discovery of the methods by which this can be done. He will seek to apply this method to practical uses, and with its help to solve some of the problems which obscure the early history of mankind. For that matter in some cases he will apply to the elucidation of historical problems lying within a nearer range; but whatever are the results he thus obtains, he will find himself in presence of this dilemma: the results will be almost valueless for those who fail to appreciate the method, while it seems unreasonable to go at great length into a description of the method without indicating for the benefit of those who may be able to grasp its true significance some of the results which may illustrate its range and potency. Applied to some historical problems of the fore-

most interest, it has actually let in a flood of light upon many occurrences which have hitherto been accepted by the civilised world on the basis of misleading literary testimony ; but, however little desirous the occult student may be to reserve for himself the benefit of his own clearer knowledge, it will not serve any useful purpose to throw into the arena of modern thought entirely unfamiliar versions of past events embraced within the historical period. It is useless to do this, at any rate, in advance of the more general recognition of the great scientific principles on which alone accurate pictures of the remote past can be reconstructed.

# OUR FUTURE IN THIS WORLD

In one of the popular magazines some writers of distinction in various departments of literature have responded to invitations asking them to give their opinions on the grave and all-important questions, "Have we lived on Earth before?" and "Shall we live on Earth again?" The questions are answered at some length by Mr Alfred Russel Wallace, Mr Rider Haggard, and Mr W. T. Stead. In their respective departments of intellectual activity each of these well-known men would command respectful attention, but a deeply-seated comicality resides in the notion that because three men are respectively great in connection with biology, novel writing and journalism, they are qualified to have an opinion worth listening to concerning a mystery of Nature belonging to the category of those investigated by the student of occult science. Mr Stead, it is true, has had some touch with Spiritualism, but for reasons with which only occult students can be familiar, that in itself is almost sure *not* to have afforded him a glimpse of the laws governing reincarnation. From the point of view of knowledge on these subjects there is a flavour of humour in the mere suggestion that psychic research confined to the methods of spiritualism could enable anyone to form an opinion concerning reincarnation. Meanwhile, broadly speaking, the reference of the questions quoted above to the three eminent writers who have answered them, might

be paralleled by a reference of the question, for example, whether "Alcyone" is a hydrogen or a helium star to the Lord Mayor, the Archbishop of Canterbury and Lord Kitchener.

The reasoning and evidence which establish the truth of the reincarnation teaching (on so secure a foundation that it is just as certain, for those who study the subject properly, as, let us say, the existence of ice within the Antarctic Circle) is diffused through an extensive literature with which the three distinguished contributors to the *London Magazine* show themselves unacquainted. The great problem is fairly well discussed in various "Theosophical Manuals," in those, for example, by Mrs Besant, entitled, *Reincarnation, Death and After*, and *Karma*, and, not to speak of other books which deal with collateral aspects of the subject, in Mr C. W. Leadbeater's admirable volumes, *The Other Side of Death* and *Glimpses of Occultism*; in *The Growth of the Soul* and *Esoteric Buddhism*, by the writer of these essays, and in a large number of American contributions to occult literature, of which *Reincarnation, a Study of the Soul, by* Jerome Anderson, may be mentioned as a favourable example. And all these books are again of no relative consequence compared with the personal experience of a considerable number of occult students who know how to recover consciousness of past incarnations—not merely their own, but also those of persons whom they knew in past incarnations and who happen to be again in incarnation with their former friends at the present time. The present writer is in touch with many persons gifted in the way described, who are as anxious as the students of any other science to get observations verified and checked; in a position to compare notes, and thus to arrive at some conclusions one may treat as bedrock on which to build later inferences. One of the laws, for instance, controlling

reincarnation provides for the simultaneous return to Earth life of those who are in close bonds of sympathy of any kind, and besides the supreme tie of affection, intellectual sympathy, and intimate friendship often operates to bring about the same result, so that among those who are now earnestly engaged on occult research of the genuine kind, I am in a position to identify at least fifteen or twenty other persons with whom at various periods during my own former lives I have been closely associated, and I know of one remarkable case in which a continuous series of lives, culminating in one now going on, has been traced back for twenty-two thousand years, seventeen lives having been lived through during that time.

From the point of view of such knowledge as this, it is, of course, ludicrous beyond measure to read grave arguments like those of Dr A. R. Wallace, in the essay before us, leading him to describe the conception of reincarnation as a "grotesque nightmare," and to answer the questions set him with an emphatic negative. His reasons for coming to these conclusions,—outside the fact that he evidently does not realise that he has never paid attention to the literature of the subject,—are, first, that the laws of heredity, as studied by Mr Francis Galton, conflict with the idea! This is what the fifth proposition of Euclid is to geometry, and the fact that many people are troubled by it at first is a standing joke for more advanced students. The answer is of elementary simplicity. Form is developed along the line of heredity, and appropriate forms are picked up by Egos coming into incarnation. If I devote my life this time to music, for instance, I must be born next time in a family the heredity of which will make it certain that my new body will be an instrument available for musical work —and so on *ad infinitum*. Can any human being of intelligence fail to understand the principle when once plainly

stated? Certain machinery will turn out, let us say, trousers of a given shape and size. They happen to fit my legs, and I wear them. Will Dr Wallace tell me that the length of my legs is a consequence ensuing from the characteristics of the machine that made the trousers? All his remarks about genius and why we resemble our ancestors are covered by the simple illustration just given. And exhibiting in another way his unfamiliarity with the subject in hand, he suggests that as mankind has not advanced morally since the days of Socrates and Plato, that conflicts with the theory that any process is in operation that provides for moral advance. But the days of Plato and Socrates are yesterday as compared with the time Nature spends on evolution. Those of us who, besides being able to look back to former lives, can survey former civilisations, when the region we now call Europe was a swamp, and the foremost people of the then existing world lived on continents that have passed away, can perceive, in the change that has since come on, a moral advance so stupendous that one is aghast to think we ourselves could ever have been morally what we were in the long (for most of us) forgotten past when we lived, for self alone, in the strangely contrasted conditions of Atlantean society.

Mr Rider Haggard's little essay on the (to him) unfamiliar topic he has been invited to treat is very modest in its tone, and his own opinion, which he humbly puts forward as of little worth, is that probably we have lived on earth before and will live here again. He reviews the various schools of opinion on the subject—the conventional religious doctrine —that in its naked, literal acceptation some people might be inclined to call by the phrase Dr Wallace uses in another application, "a grotesque nightmare"—and the Buddhist idea of reincarnation (not very inaccurately stated) and the widely diffused suspicion that nobody ever lives at all after he is

once dead, either here or anywhere else. The truth of the matter is that the very wide diffusion of that last view is terribly disgraceful to the Church that has mismanaged its mission to humanity so badly as to leave multitudes of cultivated people in the present day a prey to that dismal delusion.

Mr Stead is, of course, amusing in his crisp, emphatic way of defining his own opinions, whether these have any basis in reason or otherwise. But a statement may be crisp, and at the same time comically wrong. Mr Stead says of the people he knows who profess to believe in reincarnation: "These excellent people do not agree among themselves." If he said of astronomers—on the strength of the fact that some persons professing to claim that title say that the earth is flat, while others think it is round—"These excellent people do not agree among themselves," he would be doing exactly what he does in the case before us. We must weigh as well as count heads. There is no disagreement on any matter of principle among cultivated students of occultism in reference to reincarnation. In minor details there is as much difference of opinion as, for example, among chemists as to the true nature of a solution. But these last-named differences do not impair the value of the chemical opinion that water is composed of oxygen and hydrogen. Mr Stead says: "The late Dr Anna Kingsford was quite sure she was Plato in a former incarnation." I knew Dr Anna Kingsford very well, and I think Mr Stead is mistaken in saying this. Mrs Kingsford traced her former incarnations to one or two other historical personalities, but I never heard her suggest any fantastic idea of the kind described. But it would not affect the questions under discussion if she did. The circumstances under which such mistakes are possible could only be explained by the light of advanced occult knowledge, but are perfectly explic-

able. Mrs Kingsford, at all events, was among those who sighted the main outlines of the great truth. Those who do this may be compared to ocean navigators of a former date, who may have sighted the coast-line of a new continent. They might not all concur as to its precise contour or its exact latitude and longitude, but they corroborated each other as to the broad fact that in the region explored a mass of land existed.

Meanwhile the effort made by the *London Magazine* to turn attention to the supremely important questions it puts forward for treatment is entirely to be applauded. Comprehension of the law of reincarnation does a great deal towards investing the religions of the West with practical meaning, and with influence on life and conduct. Sulphur and flames in a future state hardly intimidate the modern ploughman even. He knows that everyone who talks of them is laughing in his sleeve the while. But it is not good for humanity to imagine that no penalties await misconduct. If we all, gentle and simple alike, realised the profound truth that such penalties are inevitable, and take the practical shape of painful conditions of life in this world of the kind we all exactly comprehend, a stimulus to good behaviour would be found operative amongst us all, the value of which would eclipse that of any conventional preaching. And the mere warning value of the reincarnation teaching is again subordinate to its importance as an encouragement and a hope. Grown-up babies who fancy that Divine Power, when they die, is going to nurse them without any trouble of their own till they grow into angels, may be left for the moment out of account; they will learn better hereafter. But thoughtful persons must see that mental and moral improvement in the case of human beings can only be the fruit of effort from within. That it is possible by such effort plainly suggests the further re-

flection that there is no hard and fast limit to such improvement. Nor is the future possibility bounded by the limitations of the human organism, as we know it now. Dr Wallace and Darwin, bringing to bear on the subjects they had studied the light of brilliant intelligence, showed mankind that the existing organisms had been developed from very much lower forms. No great wisdom is needed to convince us that such a process has probably not yet reached its final stages. Anyone who can imagine himself in the future developed by his own continuous exertions to a level of moral and intellectual advancement which would render the existing types of human organism unworthy of his occupation may be quite sure that when he comes back he will find better ones ready for his use.

But to float out into a survey of all the inspiring ideas to which the reincarnation teaching leads would mean the expansion of these few remarks into a volume. By degrees, it is to be hoped, people who want to understand the teaching will get into the habit of making their inquiries in the right quarters, and will neither invite lawyers to teach them astronomy nor chemists to analyse the charms of Wagner's music, nor expect that a prominent place in the pages of *Who's Who* must necessarily entitle the persons thus distinguished to interpret the Mysteries of Nature.

# THE NEXT WORLD

STUDENTS of those mysteries of nature which are generally still called "occult," because they are as yet only half revealed, are continually either amused or irritated, according to their individual temperament, by the way in which representatives of ordinary culture imagine that nothing can be known definitely outside the limits of the very narrow knowledge they themselves possess. Of course, the intelligent world at the present day is fermenting with the consciousness that many rents have been made in what is figuratively called "the Veil of Isis"—that many glimpses are possible for us now, in connection with future conditions of human existence lying beyond the physical period of our lives. But still the representatives of the stolid ignorance which prevailed before these glimpses were discerned—and they are still the great majority at this early stage of the transitional period—continue to exhibit the comical conceit which so often accompanies ignorance, by assigning the character of superstition to all statements of experience belonging to the newer order of things. The characteristic in question is illustrated in a peculiarly amusing fashion by a short letter in the *Times* on the subject of what is called "water-finding" or "dowsing," by a self-satisfied ignoramus whom it is unnecessary to name. He ridicules the proofs concerning the reality of this curious faculty brought forward by Professor Barrett and others who have really studied the subject, by arguing that

if such evidence constituted valid proof, we should have to assume that witchcraft in the seventeenth century was also true, as well as "astrology, crystal-gazing, and the new superstition of telepathy." Our amusing ignoramus, who is careful in parenthesis to explain to his readers that he is "Reverend," is perfectly right in one way. Evidence of the same kind as that which proves the reality of "water-finding," that is to say, the abundant experience of those who investigate the subject, establishes on a solid foundation of certainty some broad principles connected with each of the subjects referred to in the above quotation. And the new "superstition of telepathy," as all well-informed people are aware, has now been established by such evidence on the same level of certainty as any other new discovery in recent science—like those, for example, connected with radium, or the etheric vibrations which have to do with the still imperfectly understood phenomena of wireless telegraphy.

But while, of course, the treatment of new facts in unfamiliar branches of science as though they belonged to the region of superstition is, so to speak, a *reductio ad absurdum* of the common-place mental attitude, the same kind of mistake is more widely made, and with somewhat better excuse, in reference to much more important subjects of occult investigation. Large numbers of people, who may be quite reasonable enough to accept and appreciate the evidence connected with such abnormal phenomena as water-finding and crystal-gazing, may still imagine that whatever *hope* is to be entertained concerning the continuity of human life beyond the bodily period, definite knowledge on that subject is—for inscrutable motives governing the providential design—hidden permanently from incarnate human understanding. The mistake which such an attitude of mind represents is no less absolutely at variance with the facts than the more comical blunder illustrated by the letter

in the *Times*. Investigation concerning the conditions of existence attending the human soul in that which may truly be called "the next world" has been accumulated in such abundance that not much mystery is left in regard to that particular phase of future experience. This claim, however, does not really mean so much as it might at the first glance be supposed to imply. All researches into the mysteries of Nature, however successful they may be in penetrating regions which at first seemed involved in obscurity, introduce us to new horizons beyond which observation cannot penetrate. Putting the idea concisely, actual research shows us that the *next* world does lie within the range of our observation, but that worlds *ad infinitum* beyond that, or states of existence transcending those into which the soul immediately passes after death, range into infinities with which human understanding at our present stage of development is ill-qualified to grapple.

In the childhood of the human race, represented for that matter still by the attitude of mind taken up by the majority of those who vainly imagine themselves to be spiritual teachers, the next world was supposed to be a condition that might vaguely be described as one of uniformity and omniscience. The soul, if saved, was supposed to be exalted into a state of divine beatitude and perfection, or, to be disposed of in other ways with equal finality, if the saving process had missed fire. But a perception of the truth of things, illuminated by some facilities for observation extending beyond this physical plane of life, soon showed students of occult mystery that the processes of spiritual development in the after life were as gradual and varied as those which belong to the evolution of bodily forms on this earth. And so it came to pass that for many devotees of the higher knowledge the conditions of existence actually appertaining to what may truly be called the "next world" ceased to

have much more importance than those associated with the transitory experiences of this. Aspiration pointed with impassioned eagerness in the direction of loftier spiritual conditions vaguely apprehended as lying beyond. And while for one great section of humanity, representing commonplace culture, nothing is supposed to be knowable in connection with the destinies of the soul, beyond the moment when it quits the body, for the most advanced students of occultism that which is actually the next world ceases to have any interest by the time its conditions come to be fully comprehended. In its turn it was seen to constitute merely a stage on the great journey, one which had indeed its transitory aspects of welfare or the reverse, but could hardly be regarded as worth claiming the serious attention of those bent upon true spiritual progress.

Nor, indeed, for those who can catch sight of loftier possibilities, is it reasonable to suppose that the relatively unimportant distractions of a temporary, even though superphysical, period need engage their present interest with any degree of intensity. But the truth certainly is that for a large proportion of humanity at its present stage of evolution the next world, although in one sense but the avenue of approach to loftier spiritual levels, will play so important a part in after-death experiences that it is more than worth their while to study its conditions with attention. Indeed, no phrase that can be used with that significance can be otherwise than weak and inexpressive in view of its inner meaning. The vague, indistinct anticipation of a future life which faintly envelops the understanding of those who have been brought up under the influence of conventional religious teaching is in itself only one degree in advance of the agnostic distrust in the possibilities of any future at all. A hope rather than a belief that somehow in perfectly unknown ways their consciousness will be maintained is all

that has been left in the minds of those who, while in sympathy with religious ideas, are untouched by the definite acquisitions of occult research.

How can such research be carried out?—is the first question asked by those unfamiliar with the work. First of all, by the now old-fashioned methods of spiritualism. The fascinating interest of inquiry concerning the condition of those who have "passed on," gives rise to a great volume of imposture with which any new inquirer probably comes into contact before he reaches the inner nucleus of genuine work; so the multitude of common-place lookers-on carelessly suppose that no genuine experiences lie behind this unattractive barrier. But without laborious effort, anyone who has the patience to explore the great library of spiritualistic literature, which by this time has accumulated on our hands, will see abundant reason to feel sure that real communications emanating from people already established in the next world are available all around us in almost infinite abundance. For reasons which more scientific research has now made clear, a large proportion of these, it is true, seem untinged by any intellectual value. In some cases, however, they are pervaded by a much clearer intelligence, and referring to the records of my own experience, I have been for the last twelve months, and still am, in frequent communication with a former acquaintance of this life, who, since his death, has been passing rather rapidly through processes of development on the other side, and is now enabled to describe what may be called his present life, from a point of view in sympathy, so to speak, with my own desire for information. His story coincides with many of the more important records embodied in spiritualistic literature, and also vindicates occult information concerning the next world (more technically described as the Astral Plane) in a very interesting way.

The scientific view of the astral plane, with which, as I say, my friend's information corresponds, is derived by the development on the part of some people still embodied in the flesh of a possibility attaching to human nature but little understood as yet by most of us. At "death," as we commonly call it, the true consciousness passes away from the body and exists, on the astral plane, in an appropriate vehicle of consciousness consisting of highly refined matter such as that of which the whole astral plane is built. But in order so to pass away and to experience existence on the astral plane, it is by no means necessary to go through the whole process of death. Those who know how—and the acquisition of that knowledge lies at the threshold of all genuine occult inquiry—can pass out from the physical body in the astral vehicle already available for such excursions, during life. Truth to tell, all human beings of the ordinary type even, do, in this way, pass out of the body during sleep. But in ordinary cases the subtle body so made use of is not sufficiently advanced in its evolution to be available for intelligent activity. When it returns to the physical body on waking the vaguest recollections of its ultra-physical experiences are all that it contrives to bring back, and, indeed, these experiences, by the hypothesis, are themselves but vague and incoherent. But it is a simple solid fact of nature familiar to the experience of large numbers—although those numbers are a small percentage of the whole population—that where astral evolution has been adequately advanced, and where certain other characteristics inhere in the bodily organism, it is possible during life to investigate in advance the next world through which it is the destiny of all human beings eventually to pass, and to bring back clearer and more definite recollections concerning its nature than are generally to be obtained by the methods of spiritualism from those who, having finally quitted this plane of exis-

tence, lose touch, as it were, with our methods of formulating information.

In this way occult research, as the abundant literature to which it has given rise during the last twenty years will show, has enabled us to realise the variegated structure of the next world, which, be it remembered, must not be thought of as a vague spiritual condition out of touch with the phenomena of time and space. It is an outer sphere, or series of spheres, surrounding this earth, belonging to its life and plan, and without which it would be a mere dead mass of physical matter. For the convenience of description, this vast astral envelope must be thought of as consisting of a series of concentric spheres or planes, inhabited, to put the idea crudely, by human beings at different stages of moral and intellectual advancement. The multitudes who pass on from lives of coarse degradation ascend through these varied envelopes but slowly. Those whose physical life has already attuned their consciousness to loftier conditions of being slip through the lower regions unconsciously, and awake to the after-life on higher levels appropriate to their condition. And to embrace in this first glance loftier possibilities still, those whose moral and spiritual nature even during life is exalted to a very high degree of perfection scarcely have *any* experience, after the death of the body, of this astral region, though it may be fairly described as the "next world" for the majority. For them, still loftier planes of existence beyond become almost immediately accessible, but for the moment, in fulfilment of our present purpose, it is needless to speak of these. After all, for the vast majority of human beings at this period of evolution, consciousness, for considerable periods, must be focussed on some level or other of the astral plane, and the conditions attending life in this region are therefore those which have predominant interest for ordinary people.

The embarrassment one first encounters in attempting to describe the astral region has to do with the way in which —although its various sub-planes may roughly be thought of as concentric, the higher actually in space above the lower—they are not partitioned off one from another in the formal matter which applies to the storeys of a house. From the higher levels, all below are readily accessible. Those above become accessible as individual evolution advances. But, holding this fact in reserve for the moment, it must be recognised that the lowest levels, which by the very obvious fact that they are the lowest are most nearly in touch with the physical planes of this world, are inhabited in a predominant degree by what may be described as the dregs of our population. And because people of this kind are still looking back with lingering regret to the physical existence from which they have been torn, they are very apt to avail themselves of such opportunities as spiritual mediumship affords for getting in touch once more with the plane of life they regret. From higher sub-planes, however, inhabited by those who have already shaken off the bequest of earthly affinities—operative, perhaps, even with them at first, after their entrance into the next world —it is equally possible to make use of the opportunities afforded by what is called spiritual mediumship, and thus to enter into communication with friends who have been left behind. And when strong ties of affection bind persons on the astral plane to some of those whom they have left behind, even without the opportunities of mediumship, they may, and much more frequently than is commonly supposed do, take note of all that passes in connection with the life of their beloved ones here below, bringing what influence they can to bear sometimes upon their welfare or their consolation in distress.

From the commonplace point of view, it may be asked

how, in such cases, can the after life be one of happiness if associated with the observation of suffering incurred by persons beloved by the one who has passed on. The answer is, firstly, that the condition of human life in this immediately next world is not necessarily one of undiluted happiness. It is a transitional period during which very varied states of consciousness are possible. There does lie beyond a region in which existence cannot but be associated with unblemished happiness, but that is held in reserve for a later progress. But again, from the point of view of the next world, suffering undergone in this life is so manifestly of a transitory character, that, although evoking sympathetic sorrow, it is tinged with something more than a hope concerning its termination—it is qualified by the definite perception and certainty that it is only of a temporary kind, to be followed at no distant date, even in the *next* world, by conditions of relatively pure and untroubled happiness. So the one who has passed on, assuming that he belongs already to one of the higher levels of the astral region, is waiting with patience for those whom he watches over with affectionate care, foreseeing that the period for which he will have to wait will not, for him, be of very long duration. His observation of distress below is not very greatly different from that feeling with which a grown person looks on at the transitory griefs of childhood, foreseeing, with confidence, the brighter prospect of a near future.

And now,—to attempt, as far as we are able, some realisation in advance of the actual conditions under which people who have passed on find themselves in the next world,—the clear perception of natural truth available for those who can survey it in advance, shows us neither the ecstatic beatitude attached by theological conceptions to the idea of Heaven nor the horrors supposed to belong to the nether worlds of ordinary superstition. The ecstatic

bliss, be it remembered, may be attained eventually; and there is, as a matter of fact, a dark possibility in reserve for the spiritual consciousness of those who are wedded to evil in a manner that is unnecessary for the moment to discuss, simply because such terrible conditions are wholly beyond the reach even of those who lead the most abominable lives which commonplace capacities at this stage of human evolution render possible. But still the experiences immediately following disincarnation for a person of deplorably degraded life, of *merely* sensual desire, of utter criminal selfishness, are eminently disagreeable while they last. They are disagreeable, not because such conditions are the penalty appointed by Nature for the offences of such a person as we imagine. Those penalties, or rather consequences of the causes such a person has set in activity, await him on his return to physical life at a much later period under the infallible law of reincarnation when he finds himself once again on that stage of existence to which his activities have so far alone belonged, and where alone consequences appropriate to his misguided life can be realised. But still such a being has, by the hypothesis, so little within his consciousness to establish affinities with super-physical conditions of existence of anything approaching an elevated or dignified kind, that he can but slowly disentangle himself from the bequest of his earthly life. His consciousness is often for a long time torpid and all but obscured. But even he must have, latent in his nature, some smouldering spark, as it were, of the divine influence which necessarily permeates in varying degrees the whole of humanity, and so will eventually ascend not merely through the higher regions of astral experience, but even to those which may truly be described as the Heaven worlds beyond. Not, indeed, to exercise there any full capacity for vivid spiritual happiness, only possible in the case of those who

have advanced far beyond his level of evolution. But a little taper may shine in its own way in the same region illuminated by the dazzling blaze of an electric arc. In neither case is the effect due to the surrounding atmosphere, but to the interior qualities of the light which shines. So the Heaven world means a very different state of consciousness for those whose expanded capacities can embrace a great volume of its possibilities as compared with those who can absorb but some of its fainter influences. But still for them, as far as the capacities of their being go, they are filled when there with such influence, and so, as I say, even for the humbler representatives of humanity there is a period between two lives of incarnation in which the maximum felicity their nature can assimilate falls to their portion.

Nor would such humbler entities be correctly imagined as reaching towards this destiny by a regular series of promotions up through the varying sub-planes of the astral or next world. The situation is far more complicated than that conception would suggest. Let us take, to illustrate the idea, the case of a human being of harmless, gentle life, affectionate and kind within a narrow sphere of opportunity, but little endowed so far with those attributes we associate with the idea of intellectual development. Side by side with the destiny of such a person, let us consider that of a man advanced in a very high degree as regards intellectual development not necessarily tainted with any of the grosser vices possible for humanity, but touched in hardly an appreciable degree by any of the loftier emotions distinctly appropriate, in their ultimate expansion, to the loftiest and most blissful conditions of spiritual existence, for which, truth to tell, the development in no inconsiderable degree of the love principle is a *sine qua non.* The amiable but undeveloped soul will, so to speak, slip unconsciously

through the lower planes of astral discomfort, will spend some relatively brief interval on intermediate planes where no very vivid consciousness will be awakened, and will then sink into a restful condition of unconsciousness from which the immediate awakening will be on the lofty levels of the truly spiritual plane, where, of course, to be candid, such a person will be incapable of assimilating more than a few of the possibilities of that exalted level, but within the limits of his or her evolution will enjoy unblemished happiness. The other entity conceived will equally slip unharmed through the lower astral planes with which he has no particular affinity. His high intellectual development enables him to disentangle himself very quickly from the mere habits of physical life, which have never absorbed his thinking energy. He finds abundant scope for the exercise of intelligence on the highest levels of the astral plane, but includes within his consciousness very little, by the hypothesis, of that radiating love principle which belongs especially to spiritual existence. On the high levels of astral consciousness he will find nothing to interfere with or impair the intellectual enjoyments of the kind to which he has been used. Those of us who are enabled while in life to explore all regions of the astral world, tell us of their recognition, on such of its higher levels, of some men who have been distinguished during life in connection with the exercise of high intellectual gifts. They find an extreme delight in the continued exercise of these in presence of new conditions, which give rise to ranges of thought far in advance of those with which they were familiar during life. Thus a mathematician on the higher levels of the next world finds new avenues of mathematical thought opening before him which the limited observation of Nature from this point of view had never previously suggested. In his way he is eminently contented with the life in which he

finds himself, and his very contentment precludes him for a long while from touching anything better.

And though the idea is so difficult to handle from our present point of view, on those levels of existence to which he has been translated he finds books and instruments of research available for his use as readily, or perhaps much more readily, than at his earlier stage of development when in touch with the libraries and laboratories of the physical plane. How can this be in regions inaccessible to earthly vision—in spheres wherein matter as studied in the laboratories does not exist? So far a vivid scientific imagination is necessary before we can realise matter which is still matter although perceptible only to senses which differ entirely from those we are using now. Let me try and illuminate the thought by an anecdote which may be more suggestive than abstract reasoning. A friend, mainly concerned with scientific pursuits, but not without some of the faculties which have to do with the phenomena of other planes, had been—whimsically and perversely—arguing in conversation one evening along the lines of conventional scientific scepticism. At the back of his mind, of course, there lay a state of consciousness which was the answer to his own sophistical pretence of reasoning. That night it seemed to him that he awoke, and a dignified presence in his room drew him away on an excursion. He found himself in a garden glowing with flowers, and his conductor asked him if he knew one in particular which was pointed out. He did not. He was asked to pluck it and examine it in detail. He did so, with the skill of one familiar with scientific methods. He confessed that the flower was a strange one to him, striking as its appearance was. "But it is a real flower, is it not?" said his conductor. "You have its bright petals lying in your hand." "Of course it is a real flower," said my friend, "what else can it be?"

"Then," replied his companion, "go back and do not again let me hear you talking such nonsense as I heard you talking last night."

And such experiences, be it remembered, rare perhaps, and accidental as it seems for those who are imperfectly equipped with psychic faculties, lie within the grasp at any time of such occult students as those to whose researches we are mainly indebted for the knowledge we possess concerning the next world.

# LIFE IN THE NEXT WORLD

I PROPOSE, now, to throw into a shape as connected as the circumstances will allow, the highly variegated evidence we are enabled to obtain from those who have passed on beyond the present life concerning the experiences they have subsequently enjoyed—or, perhaps, sometimes "endured," would be the better word.

It must never be forgotten, however, that experiences encountered in the immediately next world, in which the soul liberated from incarnation first awakens to consciousness, do not constitute a complete body of rewards and penalties for the life that has just been spent. Future lives on the physical plane of this earth provide the appropriate rewards and penalties for action accomplished on this plane, and a vivid appreciation of this principle led modern occult students in the beginning to assume, to a greater degree than a subsequent investigation of the facts entirely bears out, that conditions of consciousness intervening between two lives on earth had very little to do with those karmic laws which governed the ultimate administration of natural justice. Our first conception with reference to the course of events pointed to the idea that a soul heavily burdened with earthly passions and desires would go through a somewhat comfortless period on the astral plane as he gradually escaped from the entanglement of these feelings,

but that the karma of evil, so to speak, would stand aside for the time, leaving the soul to enjoy on spiritual levels whatever happiness could be distilled from its best aspirations and emotions, such as these may have been, however imperfectly cultivated. When the whole process of human existence is regarded from a lofty standpoint, and when a sweep of time extending through long ages is taken into account, it is true, in accordance with the earlier and cruder view of the subject, that the astral experience intervening between earth life and the truly spiritual condition seems almost a negligible quantity. But while it is in progress it seems no more negligible than the pilgrimage, so wearisome for many of us, along the path of incarnate existence. And the attempt with which I am now concerned has to do with that astral period alone, a true comprehension of which is highly important in the interest of the world at large, even if it may be less so for those whose advanced knowledge and intensity of effort during physical life may give rise to future experiences in which the astral plane plays but a very limited part. In this way, indeed, it seems to me that many theosophic writers sin against the principle of unselfishness—so supremely important a law in connection with all spiritual progress—by dwelling too exclusively on the possibilities of a lofty spiritual future, attainable, no doubt, by a few, but as yet beyond all reasonable expectation in regard to the great majority of our companions at this stage of evolution. The astral plane for long periods of vivid consciousness, which may be thoroughly delightful or extremely the reverse, must be the home after bodily death for about 99 out of every 100 people we meet on this earth. In their interest it is extremely desirable that the conditions prevailing in that home should be understood as widely and accurately as possible, and for the 99 it might almost be declared premature to burden their consciousness

by conceptions relating to more advanced conditions of progress than it is possible for them, for some lives to come, to attain.

There are two distinctly different ways in which we may gather information concerning life in the next world—on the "astral plane," that is to say, to use the technical expression. Some few persons whose evolution has already advanced to that degree which enables them in consciousness during life to get out of the body, as the common phrase goes, and in the appropriate vehicle of consciousness, the so-called astral body, to investigate in advance the regions to which most people naturally float when that body is disengaged from its physical encumbrance, can in this way give us the result of their observation in a manner which, as far as it goes, is more trustworthy than the reports from people who are actually denizens of the next world. For the clairvoyant explorer is embarrassed by no personal relations with what he observes. He is up in a balloon, so to speak, surveying the country below him, realising the respective magnitudes of different regions and the different aspects their scenery presents. But when, as may also happen, we are enabled to get into communication with someone actually passing through the astral existence, we may be able to get from him a more detailed account of the region to which he individually belongs, together with his recollections of other regions which in the earlier stages of his progress he may have passed through. The world at large, as yet, is but imperfectly aware, for the most part wholly ignorant, of the extent to which communications of the kind thus referred to are actually available for our use. But the oceanic literature of Spiritualism is enriched with an enormous variety of stories told by those who have "passed on" concerning their experiences. These will sometimes be communicated through persons so quali-

fied to be able to write, under control, the record which the friend who has gone on desires to convey. In other cases, where the subtle conditions required are favourable, the astral inhabitant can return to this plane of life, and materialising for the purpose the organs of speech, actually convey to us his own straightforward narrative of what he wishes to tell.

The embarrassment one feels in dealing with subjects of this kind is two-fold. The actual information to be conveyed is subtle and difficult to handle, relating as it does to conditions of life very unlike those around us; and for most people at the present stage of public enlightenment, to whom the explanation may be addressed, the very methods by which the information is obtained are themselves unintelligible, the subject very likely of incredulity, and in conflict, perhaps, with crudely developed religious prejudices. But in discussing super-physical mysteries, one can only handle one branch of the subject at a time. For those who are in what is truly the absurd position of disbelieving in the fact that communications are received on this plane of life from people who have passed on, it is enough for the moment to say that any patient examination of the evidence provided in innumerable volumes on the subject will make that attitude of mind absolutely ridiculous, and will leave the honest students in no more doubt about the principal fact that communications do come back to us from the next world than if the question had to do with the possibility of getting letters from other parts of this planet.

Selecting from the flood of available material two books which represent the astral researches of living people qualified to investigate the planes of Nature now under consideration, let us proceed to consider the statements embodied in Mr C. W. Leadbeater's *Astral Plane* and Mrs Besant's

*Ancient Wisdom.*[1] Then in regard to communications received from inhabitants of the astral region, I will concern myself especially with three streams of information available in a literary form; having, that is to say, been produced by automatic writing through qualified mediums, and finally with a body of communications I have myself received from astral plane friends speaking to me with "the direct voice." We shall see in how interesting a way these varied contributions to our knowledge harmonise with each other in regard to essentials, while varying in a way which is quite adequately accounted for by the differences of opportunity which the speakers or writers have enjoyed.

From the volumes embodying theosophical research, we obtain in the first instance a clear conception of the next world as itself divided into regions differing very widely from one another in their characteristics, so that, on some, existence is in truth distressing and burdensome to a terrible degree, while on others it is so exhilarating that the happy denizens thereof imagine themselves already provided for in a condition of eternal bliss. The lowest regions of all embody, truth to tell, conditions of gloom and misery which can hardly be exaggerated. Their population mainly represents the scum of humanity — murderers, ruffians, violent criminals of all types, drunkards, profligates, the vilest of mankind. Terrible passions of revenge and hatred are stirring the majority of these unhappy beings. Helpless longing for physical enjoyments no longer possible on that plane of existence contribute to render the lives of all who are there deplorable and wretched to an extent that can hardly be over-coloured. But this is no sooner said than many problems of grave importance arise in connection with such a condition of things. It would seem, then,

[1] Of course my own book, *The Growth of the Soul*, deals also with this question, amongst others with which it is more directly concerned.

that the penalty of earthly misdeeds is *not* reserved for the next physical life ; that the next world is a veritable sphere of retribution in the case of those who deserve to suffer; and then if future lives on earth are to be painful and distressing, as a penalty for evil doing, the whole system is unjust beyond even the conceptions of ordinary human justice, where, at all events, the criminal is not punished twice for the same offence ! Another embarrassing question perplexes the understanding. Where, in terms of our space, is this region situated? It has been said already (in the former essay) that the sub-planes of the astral world may fairly be thought of as concentric spheres surrounding the planet, only invisible to common sight by reason of the manifold limitations to which this faculty is subject, and of which, for the most part, it is so unconscious. But we cannot reconcile with the reason of things the idea that this region of gloom and misery is to be found anywhere above the surface of the earth bathed in the blue heavens to which we turn our upward gaze; hardly less easy of comprehension from another point of view is the conjecture that it may somehow exist within the very body of the earth itself. But, at all events, the real existence of such a region is but too surely established, not merely by clairvoyant observation, but by the testimony of more than one of those to whom I referred above as giving us the story of their own experience.

It may be as well, perhaps, before passing on, to spend some further thought upon the problems of actual space in connection with this great subject. Many imaginations revolt at the attempt to assign in terms of terrestrial measurement any definite place or region to the various sub-planes of the astral world. In vague terms, none will quarrel with the conception that the astral world does envelop our own, but when that admission is dissected in detail, it seems

unacceptable to many thinkers. And for all of us it is necessary to associate with speculation along these lines a recognition of the great truth that matter of an ultra-refined order may interpenetrate matter of a grosser kind, and in so doing be as unconscious, so to speak, of the lower kind as that is of the more refined medium. Again, on planes of Nature transcending the physical, matter is endowed with mysterious characteristics that have been very erroneously, and in a misleading way, described as endowing it with a fourth dimension. That subject is one which claims independent treatment; but whatever the actual attributes of super-physical matter thus referred to may be, they no doubt give rise to a condition of things which makes it seem erroneous to assign definite measurements in terms of our space to spaces of the astral world. From different levels, or from different stages of enlightenment, some of the astral friends who have communicated with myself on this subject give apparently incompatible assurances. One of them belonging to the fourth sub-plane (counting from the bottom upwards) had never paid attention to the question until I pressed it on his notice, but, endeavouring to ascertain the actual facts, declared that the region to which he belonged, although one from which, of course, he could reach the earth plane in a flash if necessary, was situated about 500 miles above the surface of the earth. Another friend who has already ascended to a more exalted level, and speaks from the sixth sub-plane, objects to measure any of these distances in miles, conceiving that idea to be misleading. And yet, pressed with the question whether the spacial conditions to which he is now accustomed do not include—whatever other attributes they may possess—those of the three dimensional world with which we are acquainted, he is fain to confess that that certainly is so, although still maintaining that any statement bringing miles

into relation with astral condition is bound to be misleading rather than instructive.

I can readily imagine that to be the case, but, at the same time, if we banish in imagination from the astral world the conceptions relating to space that we are familiar with here, we are apt to lose sight too completely of its definitely material character. Loftier regions of consciousness should be thought of, certainly, with as little reference as possible to ideas embodying material conceptions, but let it always be remembered that the astral plane is but an intermediate condition, partaking of attributes on the one side borrowed as it were from physical manifestation, on the other sharing those reserved for loftier conditions. And in reference to the astral body adhering to and clinging round the physical body during life that is definitely discernible, for those who see it, as having dimensions, and as extending beyond the outlines of the physical body by feet or inches, as the case may be, and analogy certainly suggests that similar characteristics belong to the astral plane itself which may not improperly be thought of as the astral body of the earth.

But returning now to the problem arising from the painful or disagreeable experiences that some people encounter on first passing over, let us consider whether these can fairly be regarded in the light of penalties for mis-doing, or accounted for on another line of thought. What, to begin with, are the facts with which we have to deal? Of the three literary narratives referred to above, transmitted by mediumship from people who have gone through many years and stages of astral experience, one, embodied in a printed volume entitled, *A Wanderer in Spirit Lands*, may claim our attention first, and has claimed mine because I know enough of the circumstances under which it was produced to be absolutely sure that it is a genuine dictation

from unseen regions of consciousness through the hand of a writer in reference to whom any suspicion concerning her *bona fides* would be, for those acquainted with her, grotesquely absurd. In this case, the real author frankly admits that he "passed on" rather suddenly in early middle life, having misspent his period of physical incarnation as completely as was possible for a man devoted to a career of selfish and reckless indifference to the sorrows he brought on others with whom his life was associated. He wakes to consciousness on the other side, in what seems to him a region of all but total darkness and misery. For a long while he cannot escape from the neighbourhood of his grave. He cannot in any way make his presence known to the one woman whom in life he really loved, whom he sees mourning for his loss. After a prolonged period of this wretchedness he encounters some who tell him that only in one way can he escape from these conditions. He must at last learn the lessons that earth life had failed to teach him—he must devote himself to the service of those whom he may find enduring sufferings even worse than his own. Only by at last engaging himself in the performance of unselfish duty can he escape from the conditions with which he himself, by his former life, has surrounded his consciousness. The story is far too elaborate in detail to be completely epitomised here; it thrills with human interest throughout, for the one genuine emotion or love that has accompanied him from his earth life becomes the redeeming influence of his later progress—the only force powerful enough to stimulate his efforts as he advances along the painful path of self-redemption. Eventually, after terrible experiences in regions even more saturated with suffering than those in which he first awakened to consciousness, he ascends to higher levels, from which at last he is enabled to communicate with the woman he loves, though still (now

willingly) he continually returns to the lower levels to go on with the work by which he has accomplished his own purification.

It is highly possible that many details of his narrative represent imperfect powers of observation and mistakes, arising from the curious liability to misunderstand appearances, which certainly besets all those who enter the astral region without the advantage of much preliminary training. But still, the main outlines of his story confirm not merely the narratives of others, as I will endeavour to show, but also fit in with many of the explanations given by living clairvoyants, fortified in their explanations of the astral plane by occult knowledge. For example, we are told that the external appearance of the astral body is on each stage of its progress a reflection of the interior conditions of the soul. When our Wanderer at first realises the aspect he presents during his earlier passage through the lower subplanes, he is eager rather to conceal himself than to manifest himself to the woman he loves on earth. When at last he is privileged to do this, he has attained a condition in which his external appearance, while still recognisable, is a glorified rather than an actual portrait of his earthly self.

But strangely enough, in reference to another narrative that has come under my observation, though of this I can only speak in guarded terms, as the recipient, for private reasons, would not sanction its publication, we find that some distressing experiences on the lower planes of the astral may befall people who were in no way distinguished by leading bad lives on earth. The case in question has to do with a woman dying in early life, whose brief incarnate experience was simply that of unblemished happiness owing to the wealth and love with which she was surrounded, but whose innocence turns out to have been due rather to absolute freedom from temptation than to interior character-

istics. Circumstances on the other side quickly revealed her nature as utterly selfish and undisciplined in reality, with the result that she in turn goes through experiences not wholly unlike in principle those described by the Wanderer. For the reason already suggested I must not refer to these in detail, but the lesson given appears to be that happy conditions on the astral plane can only arise from what may be called the interior suitability of the soul for happiness of those kinds which are associated, at all events in some degree, with generous and lofty impulses. On this plane of life, happiness, as we understand it, may sometimes be the privilege of those in possession of all they want. On the astral plane it is only compatible with interior conditions, amongst which the selfish craving for possessions can play but a subordinate part. And the third of the literary communications with which I am dealing contributes to substantiate this view indirectly, because, in that case, the man passing over, after a life not only of refined culture but of lofty aspirations on earth, has no experience of the lower planes at all. He awakened to consciousness on those where already his own nature found an appropriate expansion, from which he gives an alluring account of the after life to his friends on earth, and is mainly concerned with conveying teaching relating to the great laws controlling human evolution, the character of which is enough to show to the occult student that for those who are ready to learn, the development of knowledge concerning those great laws has been going on amongst those who have passed over, concurrently with the conditions that have been available to the occult students here during recent years. For those spiritualists who are under the impression that their friends on the other side never confirm teachings concerning human evolution which embody for instance the doctrine of reincarnation, it will be a

surprise to learn how frequently at the present day this great principle is coming into recognition among those on the astral plane whose intellectual activity is sufficiently awakened to deal with problems of that nature. And in reference to that matter I may say at once that of the three friends in the next world who have lately been communicating with me, two of them are fully alive to the great truth that reincarnation at some period in the future will await them, while the third has not yet got sufficiently clear of the lower levels to be much interested in anything but the hopes he entertains of going higher ere long.

In one of the other two cases we have a very direct confirmation of what, for convenience sake, I may call the Wanderer's view. R——, that is to say, without having led any specially bad life, found himself when first awakening beyond the grave very much in the condition described by the Wanderer, and this was due in his case, according to his own explanation, arrived at later, to the fact that his consciousness was very much saturated with the sentiment of hatred, one which we can realise at once as so distinctly antagonistic to that sympathetic and helpful temperament required for existence on the higher astral levels that it is not surprising to find it a serious drag on the progress of the soul.

Now, let us try to synthesize these various streams of information into something more like a coherent interpretation of the destinies awaiting mankind in the immediately next world than has hitherto been provided by any teaching I know of embodied in occult literature. The astral plane is undeniably a region playing a more important part in existence than some early occult writings led students to suppose. But the recognition of this truth does not destroy the force of a position that has been emphasized in occult literature, to the effect that the astral plane is a region in

which a struggle between the higher and lower principles of anyone passing over must take place, and from which, if that struggle ends, as it were, in the supremacy of the higher, the entity passes away to regions of unblemished spiritual happiness. The mistake lay in imagining that the struggle was a brief tug of war leading at once to one result or the other. I do not doubt that that which may be called the early occult statement is realised in the long course of events. People, that is to say, who by virtue of their interior progress during life have really qualified themselves almost completely for a passage to the loftiest spiritual conditions, scarcely awake to the consciousness of any levels of the astral; may never have the slightest touch with its lower and more distressing conditions, and may pass through it almost, to use the old illustration, like an arrow through a cloud.' But these are the exceptional cases as compared with the bulk of humanity. The vast majority are not only unfitted for the lofty happiness of a purely spiritual condition, but equally so for the relatively lofty conditions of happiness in a quasi-material world, where the conditions of the astral plane prevail. And thus we may think of whatever purifying processes they pass through on the lower planes of suffering as due rather to the deficiencies of their nature than to their definite liability, so to speak, to penal treatment.

Take, for example, the case referred to above, of a young woman whose life on earth had been stained by absolutely no overt misdeeds, but whose interior nature was still in great need of development. Her deficiencies precluded her from the immediate enjoyment after death of happiness of that kind which does not ensue from the possession of what you want, but from interior conditions in harmony with the loftiest purposes of nature. She suffers undeniably in the realisation of her deficiencies in the gradual acquisi-

tion of characteristics that enable her, in the course of a period measurable within the lifetime of her still living correspondent, to ascend to conditions where she is at last happy and contented. But is there not in this case a double penalty? By the hypothesis, our young friend's purely earthly karma was free of all embarrassment. In her case there is nothing to preclude a return to earth eventually under conditions as enjoyable as those of her last life. The suffering she incurs is the inevitable accompaniment of moral growth, and has nothing to do with what we commonly conceive as the karma of former lives. And our friend, the Wanderer, whose record as regards his earthly karma is one which cannot but be productive of a next life under distinctly unfavourable conditions, is not during his progress through the astral planes encountering the specific penalty of misdeeds. He is himself, as in the other case, enduring suffering incidental to moral growth which he has not previously accomplished. And that moral growth attained through suffering will necessarily mitigate the painful conditions of the next physical life, in so far as it will provide him with an attitude of mind which will make the best, instead of the worst, of them.

Undoubtedly the intimate acquaintance we are now acquiring with the next world dissipates the fantastic conceptions thereof which have sufficed to entertain the imagination of the world's children during primitive ages of culture, nor does this more intimate acquaintance operate to extinguish altogether the conceptions which represent the after state as liable to be a state of retribution in most cases. That is the rough view of the uncultured mind in reference to suffering incurred. A subtler conception will discriminate between the suffering due to moral deficiency and the suffering due to definite acts productive of misery to others, the reaction of which must ultimately afflict the

misdoer. No doubt in many cases which represent not merely injury to others, but deplorable moral deficiency as well, there must in this way be encountered consequences that seem at the first glance a double penalty for the same offence. In truth, these consequences represent a division of the penalty, one part falling on the reincarnated entity at a later period, the other on the soul in its inter-incarnate experience. But clearly from all narratives of suffering on the astral plane there emerges the conception that these are in the nature of curative rather than penal treatment, and supplementary in their character to the suffering (as far as it may be curative) of physical existence.

As for why it appears inevitable on all planes that moral progress at its earlier stages, at all events, must be associated with suffering, that problem is one which the wisest among occult students of our own period are inclined to leave unsettled for the present. One may know a great deal more than is common knowledge as yet concerning the laws that govern human evolution, its vast scope in the future, its marvellous retrospect in the past, and at the same time we may remain even more convinced than at the outset, of our inability to fathom the deepest mysteries which underlie the whole undertaking. No question is more familiar to the occult student as emanating from those who first glimpse the idea that he knows something, than the old and time-worn query concerning the origin of evil. Answers which sound like answers can readily be framed, but those who might be best able to evade the point of the enquiry may be the most assured of our inability as yet to account really for the phenomenon. Whether in the universe there exist schemes of evolution providing for the loftiest development of individual consciousness along paths strewn with flowers alone and quite free from their thorns, is a question that few of us are yet in a position to deal with. We know that such a design

has not been contemplated in our own case, and thus all problems connected with suffering turn on its specific origin in individual cases, and on the results to which in some, at all events, it manifestly leads.

But even now I have but faintly touched on the question which for some enquirers should perhaps evoke the most interesting answer available concerning the next world, that which relates to the manner in which lives are lived there. To explain this completely would be to grasp in advance conditions of thought and feeling almost as unlike those with which we are familiar here as the attributes of matter are unlike those of earthly physics. But a great deal can be comprehended, and the first intelligible truth to emphasise is that, in the beginning, life in the next world is so strangely similar in its character to life in this, that a great many people passing over are for a long time incapable of realising that they have gone through the change they have been in the habit of calling death. The truth is only forced on their understanding when they find themselves no longer able to communicate with their still living friends, and when, perhaps, others who have previously passed over reach them and explain the situation. Where this happens the experienced inhabitants of the next world will be their guides to the regions where they properly belong; and here assuming that the region in question is raised above those dreary and depressing lower levels to which reference has been already made, they will find themselves in presence of conditions extraordinarily like those of the life they have left, even to the extent of including natural scenery, and apparently houses in which the inhabitants live. That the living in question is widely unlike the earth life may be realised when we comprehend that people established there are freed from all the burdens incidental to wants of the flesh, troubled by no need to eat or drink, troubled by no craving for property

which is not theirs, troubled by no need for incomes with which to secure whatever comforts they require.

Efforts of imagination almost beyond the possibilities of ordinary thinking are required to picture the conditions of such existence clearly in the mind, for if we say that all the things around our next world inhabitants are products of their imagination, the unreal figments of a dream, we shall quite misrepresent the true facts, although it is undeniably true that the plastic matter of the next world so readily responds to thought and desire that the objects surrounding people there are the product of their own thinking, subjective to that extent and yet objective when so brought into existence. I have questioned one friend who speaks to me from the fourth sub-plane of the astral (counting from the bottom), and he maintains that he lives there in a house with congenial friends, not, as it happens in his case, those whom he knew on earth, but those whose development beyond this life has corresponded with his own. If I question him: "Does the view you command from the house in which you say you live remain always the same, or does it change?" he frankly answers that it changes. Or someone else a little better able than he, because speaking from a higher level, to explain the situation maintains that there is an underlying objective reality in the view in question, but that this is developed, expanded, and continually modified by the thought of those who are looking at it. The prosaic thinker of this world will imagine that everything must be muddled and unreal in a world so constituted. The confusion is to be found merely in the attempt to picture in terms of physical plane consciousness the subtler conditions of consciousness on another level. For those who are there, by universal consent, all that lies around them, the scenery, the friends, the details of their domestic lives, are as real as such things possibly can be for

us. Enthusiastic informants dealing with enquiries of this nature will constantly declare, "much more real!" much more satisfying, much more permanent than the decaying phenomena of the earth world left behind. "Do you or the friends with whom you live ever wish that you were back again in the earth life?" I asked my friend R—— on the fourth sub-plane. "Never!" was the impassioned reply, given with instantaneous eagerness, and yet that fourth plane represents conditions far inferior in their resources of happiness to the regions of the next world still beyond it; and let readers of this attempt to interpret such conditions never forget that the whole series of astral plane territories is but for human souls in progress, a transitional condition inferior in every way, and especially in its power of conferring happiness to those more truly spiritual regions beyond, with which these present explanations have nothing to do.

I know how grotesquely impossible it would be for the prosaic thinker, for whom nothing is real but the matter he can feel and see, to believe in or realise the existence of all these teeming worlds of phenomena and consciousness somewhere above us in the blue empyrean, apparently such an empty void. But a thrill of intelligence is stirring the consciousness of current generations, and the coarse incapacity to transcend the limitations of the physical world which distinguished the intellectual progress of the later nineteenth century is rapidly giving way in presence of the advanced revelations for which the twentieth is being prepared. Material phenomena are everywhere relative to sense perceptions. We need not trouble ourselves with metaphysical fancies, which, on the basis of this important truth, attempt to explain matter away altogether, and the phrase quoted above in reference to matter which has an objective foundation and subjective development may be

true of all orders of matter with which sense perceptions work. For sense perceptions, quite unlike our own, the worlds for us unseen which surround the physical globe may be material, as definitely as the rocks and seas of the planet for physical observers.

"But if this ground on which you walk is solid to your footsteps, how do you get down to those lower levels where, amidst still suffering brothers of the human race, your work appears to lie?" I asked of my fourth plane friend. And endeavouring to give a physical plane colouring or illustration to his answer, he says: "It seems like going down in a diving bell created around one by the desire to descend," and then the descent suggests the idea of passing through thick fog. But all hints of this kind must necessarily be very slight, and there would be danger in trusting too implicitly to any one such statement because of the extent to which it must necessarily be coloured by the consciousness of the narrator. But that which it is important for people, willing to make in advance some little study of the next world to which most assuredly they are bound, to realise in advance, is that they will not be migrating to any fantastic fairyland, nor to any monotonous Heaven in which they will be condemned to sing hymns for ever, but that they will find in the real next world great possibilities of happiness, if their moral nature is fit for this—very arduous and even painful training at first, if they live this life in a moral condition out of harmony with true happiness; abundant scope for the exercise of intellectual ability if that should be superadded to the more spiritual attributes, which in the next world are a *sine qua non* for those who desire to enjoy it. Above all, let those who already in some degree can forecast the nobler emotions, which the training of the next world seems specially designed to cultivate, realise that they will find ample opportunities for work there to be

performed in the interests of humanity, opportunities in presence of which the relatively disheartening conditions which surround philanthropy on earth will all have disappeared, providing everyone who is willing to do good, with spheres of activity in which beyond the possibility of mistake, it is certain that his activity will have good results.

## THE TRUE MEANING OF "OCCULTISM"

OUTSIDE the circle of those who are seriously concerned with the study of occultism, misapprehensions are very apt to arise concerning the significance of that expression. Nor are they who make use of it with the full consciousness of what they mean, otherwise than well aware that it is a misleading term which they merely employ for want of a better. The situation under which the term has come into use is roughly as follows:—In the ancient world the mysteries of Nature were studied under conditions differing very widely from those prevailing in our own time. When things were found to happen, people had not yet got into the habit of questioning the fact by asking whether such happenings could be accounted for along the lines of knowledge with which they were familiar. Glance a moment, for example, at the oracles of ancient Greece. With ludicrous conceit modern writers have sometimes supposed that the keen-witted people of that period were all imposed upon by charlatans in connection with the oracles they consulted, just as the modern bumpkin of the country fair might be imposed upon by a mountebank. Some critics, indeed, even outside the ranks of those who know enough to comprehend the theory of Greek oracles, have endeavoured to point out that it is unreasonable to suppose the Greeks as a body so stupid as to maintain their faith in the value of oracles through many centuries, if these all the while were no more really important than mountebank

tricks. The laws connected with spiritual inspiration, clairvoyance, and mediumship have since engaged the attention of a comparatively limited number of students more open-minded than the rest, and these have drifted into the way of referring to the deep underlying principles operative in connection with such manifestations as belonging to an "occult" or hidden department of human knowledge. So also in connection with much that went on in Egyptian temples, whose activities long preceded the developments of Delphi and other Grecian seats of occult science. The common people were certainly impressed by performances which appeared miraculous to them at the time, and may have been the outcome either of knowledge amongst the priests anticipating some of the familiar observations of our own science, or, what is really more probable, they may have been due to the acquisition by the old Egyptian priesthood of resources by means of which natural forces with which modern science is still unfamiliar were brought into play. In all cases, however, in the ancient world, such knowledge was jealously guarded by its possessors, and whether it had to do with those which we now call psychic phenomena, or with mere anticipations of modern physical discovery, all the science of the early period was "occult" in the sense that it was hidden from general observation.

Now, within recent years, multitudes of people have become aware of the fact that, independently of phenomena that have to do with and can be explained by reference to the physical senses, things are happening which claim for their interpretation a deeper investigation than can be carried out by mere laboratory researches or with the aid of mechanical instruments. The progress of human knowledge might have been provided for in a more satisfactory way if such happenings had always been examined by those already familiar with natural law as affecting the objects of sense, or,

in other words, of physical science. But events did not fall out along those lines. People who accidentally became acquainted with the phenomena of mesmerism, clairvoyance, spiritualism, and the rest, were sometimes amongst those trained in scientific work, but much more often were ill-qualified to present their experiences to the world in a manner calculated to command respectful attention. And no matter what phrases they employed to describe the pursuits in which they were engaged, these were promptly condemned in the public mind by the offensive ridicule directed against them by representatives of narrow-minded and conventional bigotry. And this kind of condemnation was rendered all the more distressing by the tendency shown on the part of a great many of those concerned with ultra-physical enquiry to surround their proceedings with turgid and bombastic phrases derived from mediæval literature, which seemed to them to invest with extra mystery and wonder the discoveries with which they were concerned. French writers even, in some cases no doubt with many claims to respectful attention had they been properly understood, were especially liable to fall into this bad habit. Eliphas Levi's writings, for example, *Le Dogme et rituelle de la Haute Magie*, *La Clé des grands Mystères*, and others, are saturated in this way with a portentous solemnity which greatly detracts from, instead of accentuating, their real value. Baron du Potet also, whose researches in connection with mesmeric, and what French students of the subject are fond of calling "magnetic," experiments, are described to the world in books overladen with pretentious language quite out of harmony, at all events, with the spirit of scientific research in other directions. But all this sort of literature manifestly belongs to the subject of occultism, and the term which thus has to be more and more frequently employed, as the deep significance of the enquiry it represents is understood, becomes

more and more discredited in popular estimation by the unscientific attitude of mind with which it is too often associated.

Perhaps the best word which might really be used to designate our growing comprehension of natural laws, conditions, and states of consciousness, with which commonplace mankind has hitherto been entirely unfamiliar, would be one which was often employed by the gnostic writers of Alexandria. The term "Theosophy" might readily expand beyond its strict etymological meaning into the title of the future science which should deal with higher planes of Nature, leading enlightened wisdom a little nearer to the divine fountain-head of all knowledge; and it might roughly be translated as the science of the spiritual worlds. But that term again has had a narrow and conventional meaning assigned to it by association, especially with a specific society of modern growth, which, however dignified and important it may really be, has been the target of so much attack and misrepresentation that its designation for the world at large is apt to evoke a multitude of false conceptions. Another word, which has recommendations as descriptive of the great modern movement in the direction of enlarging the area of science so as to include some superphysical regions within our reach, might also be taken from Alexandrian literature, and would, at all events, have an obvious significance for modern readers because of their familiarity with its converse. "Gnosticism" could be taken as the designation of the highest science, and since everyone knows that the "agnostic" is a man who deliberately professes ignorance of anything that can be called divine science, the "gnostic" would be at once understood as one who professed to regard a great deal of divine knowledge as coming within the scientific purview. But for classical students, at all events, the term "*gnostic*" has such very specific reference to the writings and philosophy of the

Neo-platonists that they would regard it as misapplied to the modern investigation of psychic phenomena. "Divine" science might be a phrase not improperly appropriated to the study of spiritual nature, but it would be flavoured with rather a disagreeable intellectual arrogance, and, moreover, would too closely resemble a scheme of thinking which, under the designation "Christian Science," has enlisted the enthusiasm of multitudes for a view of Nature quite out of harmony with the exact thinking of those who are in the habit of calling themselves occult students.

It seems as though for the present these will have to be content with that title, hoping that as time goes on even people outside their own communion will come to understand that in its modern acceptation occultism claims to be not so much a department as an expansion of ordinary science, beyond the limits fully illuminated so far by physical investigation into regions of Nature which have hitherto lain hidden from commonplace observation, but are no more really fenced off from us by impassable barriers than those recently opened fields of electric and chemical research, which, for the scientists of only a generation ago, were quite as occult as the laws which may regulate the utterances of an inspired seer or seeress.

It is needless to burden this brief essay with catalogues of books relating to modern occult research, having to do not merely with the investigation of super-physical planes of Nature lying beyond the range of any researches that can be carried on by physical means, but also with principles underlying the constitution of matter which tend to interpret the phenomena of chemistry still presenting unsolved problems to the chemist who denies himself the help of occultism. But such books are abundant in the present day, and others will show how occult research carries back our knowledge concerning the early history of the human

race through all but illimitable vistas of the past, compared to which the written records of the last six or seven thousand years constitute no more than a final chapter torn from the whole book, and desperately misunderstood by those who know nothing of the missing pages. Modern occultism may concern itself sometimes with an attempt to elucidate the meaning of fantastic symbols and allegories embodied in the records of the Cabala, or running through the writings of mediæval Rosicrucians and devotees of alchemical symbology, but this is merely a ramification of occultism. These symbols, however irritating to modern taste, undoubtedly represented vague states of consciousness, in the past approximating to exact knowledge. But even if we credit those who were attached to their use with a still greater degree of enlightenment, it is no longer necessary to wrap up their interpretation of even the most divine mysteries in symbolical phrases and allegorical stories designed to be unintelligible for the multitude. A much fuller light than that which the mediæval writers enjoyed has now been shed upon these mysteries, and, furthermore, the motives which in former ages rendered it necessary to deal with them in obscure language have passed away with the growth of religious toleration, which exempts us from the terrors of the Inquisition, even though we may be concerned with investigations which the crude theology of former times discountenanced. Occultism, therefore, is emerging by degrees into regions of overt science, but the subjects on which its energies are bent are still those which were less successfully pursued by the occultists of former ages, and thus it is impossible as yet to escape from association with the phrases which they were in the habit of employing. No doubt there is an element of absurdity in describing as occult or hidden, laws and principles of Nature which are fully described in current literature, and in

reference to which it is supremely important that the world at large should be as far as possible enlightened. But until a more general diffusion of the knowledge available for mankind, as certain higher human faculties come more generally into use, leads to the employment of a terminology that has not yet been invented, we must go on talking about the acquisitions and achievements of occultism, meaning thereby the knowledge gained by the use of the faculties above referred to. Already these are diffused widely enough to bring about supremely important results, and I now propose to survey the fields of research to which the modern student of occultism directs his attention, and to indicate in a broad and general way the results which have so far rewarded his endeavour.

The great embarrassment which stands in the way of trying to carry out an idea of this sort has to do with the impossibility of beginning at the beginning of the story which has to be told. The world at large practically knows nothing as yet concerning the principles underlying human evolution, and is, in this way, wholly unsuspicious of the existence on earth of superior agencies intervening between the human family, as visible around us, and the divine impulses to which its origin is due. But such entities exist, however secluded from general observation, and without their help the dawning capacities of some amongst ourselves —bringing their possessors into some sort of touch with ultra-physical conditions of existence—would grope very helplessly amongst the obscurities in their way. So it is not quite true to say that we are beginning at the beginning of this story if we dwell, in the first instance, on what is known concerning the faculty of clairvoyance regarded as an instrument of research in connection with the higher mysteries of Nature. But, on the whole, that is the best way of getting minds unfamiliar with occult research into

tune with the possibilities of such undertakings. People must learn to realise, as the result of an independent enquiry, what really are the possibilities lying before the properly trained clairvoyant before they can be expected to pay any serious attention to the fruit of his researches.

The whole subject, it is true, has been so terribly contaminated by imposture, that those who stand aside from it have, at all events, some excuse for the attitude of mind they maintain, even if they do not directly come under the lash of Pope's censure as belonging to the class of those who

> " . . . . have still an itching to deride,
> And fain would be upon the laughing side."

While the advertisement columns of certain newspapers are laden with offers of self-styled clairvoyants to look into the future for five shillings in the interest of anybody prepared to pay the fee, it is natural enough that people quite outside the range of serious experience in this connection should treat clairvoyance as of no more importance than gipsy fortune-telling. But the people really to blame for this state of things are not so much the fee-hunters as the scientific men of the last century, who have been dull enough to miss the extremely important significance of the clairvoyant faculty as such, independently altogether of the value, as far as early experimentation was concerned, of the knowledge to which it first gave rise. Enough experience has been floating about the world, for the better part of a century, to show that there are other avenues to consciousness besides the senses, and that these are capable of putting consciousness in relationship with realms of Nature enormously more important than those with which the mere physical senses can be concerned. But unhappily the representatives of orthodox science have for the most part impeded rather than promoted investigation along these lines, and the occult student alone has been

persevering enough to struggle with difficulties which the students of ordinary science might have smoothed away, to the end that at last he has realised the all but infinite capacity of the clairvoyant faculty for cognising the conditions of ultra-physical existence, and even of this physical earth at periods inconceivably more remote than any which can be reached by archæological enquiry. To justify this view would claim a very protracted digression. The growing literature relating to Atlantis will indicate to some extent the wealth of material available for those who wish to go for themselves again over the long road that has been travelled by the modern occult student.

I must not leave the reader under the impression that the knowledge, with which the modern occultism is concerned, has been exclusively acquired by means of the clairvoyant faculty, as exercised by those whose testimony can be employed to check and fortify each other's researches. Again, one would have to appeal to a considerable volume of literature, in order to indicate the circumstances under which the occult student becomes aware of the fact that access can be had, under certain conditions, to representatives of the human family enormously more advanced, both as regards their intellectual, spiritual, and psychic development, than the most gifted amongst those whose names are familiar to literature. But what I have said may serve to indicate the nature of the foundation on which the convictions of the modern occultist are built. However offensive the idea seems to twentieth century conceit, a fairly considerable number of earnest and qualified devotees of the higher science have by this time been growing into a knowledge of the fact that the world includes some few inhabitants standing on a far higher level of evolution than that familiar as yet to the civilised world at large. And when the conditions of their own spiritual development are such as to

enable them to become, in a certain measure, the pupils of "adept" teachers, they may in turn become qualified to exercise, in something like its true perfection, the clairvoyant faculties which in the absence of systematic training are apt to be concerned with relatively frivolous pursuits.

And now, what is the outcome of the teaching that is filtering through into the world from higher levels, and becoming available for verification, at all events, by earnest enquirers standing only a little way in advance of their fellows? The purpose of occult study may be roughly defined as aiming at the comprehension of human evolution as a whole. At an early stage of the enquiry a student realises that the mere observation of what takes place in the one physical life of a man no more serves to explain his place in Nature than one glimpse of a river in an unexplored continent would teach the traveller to know the mountains from which it took its source or the seas towards which it was flowing. It is only when we realise that there is no really impassable barrier lying between our consciousness on this earth and that which we reach when any given physical incarnation is over that death is perceived to be not really a mystery at all. The region beyond the grave is really a bourne from which *all* travellers return, and only when we trace back their journeys through this world in the past, and realise the nature of the road that has been travelled by those who have outstripped them in some conspicuous degree, do we begin to see that human evolution is a process quite within the capacities of human comprehension as a whole. And only then do we begin to see how infinitely important as bearing on our future course through the ages may be the influence exerted on our conduct by that accurate comprehension and by a detailed survey of the past. That in a nutshell is the true meaning of occultism. It is the science of life and consciousness; the study which unfolds

"human origins" in a manner which utterly eclipses the speculation of the most ingenious geologist; a forecast of the human future which even more brilliantly surpasses the teachings of the most aspiring theologian. Incidentally, of course, occultism brings us within sight of natural phenomena going on all around us, of which the ordinary world is wholly and entirely unaware. It enables us to take a new view of matter, and to realise that just as to the physical senses the multitudinous beings who pervade the spaces in which we ourselves move are perfectly imperceptible to human creatures of the ordinary type, so these human creatures, or, at all events, their human bodies, with the houses and cities they occupy, are utterly imperceptible to the senses of that other multitude pervading the same space. This idea, and innumerable details hanging to it, are commonplace and familiar to the occultist, however, beyond the range of ordinary thinking, and the occultist is equally aware that the plane or condition of Nature just referred to is merely the antechamber of those which are far loftier in their nature and potentialities. He knows full well, even if he may not be able individually to verify the fact, that the planets of this system, so far as telescopes can show them, are merely the physical worlds of the system, and that many more would suddenly reveal themselves to higher faculties, if he were able to develop them—would spring for him into existence if those faculties were opened, as the sun's corona suddenly reveals itself to the watcher of a total eclipse.

Language must inevitably be vague when it deals with the higher planes of Nature and the possibilities awaiting human evolution in the future; but with reference to the past, knowledge rewards the student of occultism with information as precise as that which can be gathered, with all the resources of modern journalism, concerning events and

progress in far-off lands within our own time. The six or seven thousand years of human history, partially illuminated by the remnants we retain of ancient writing, are really no more than the last chapters of a mighty story stretching back for years, to be reckoned by the million, over periods the history of which the student of occultism has recovered from the memory of Nature. But it would hardly lie within the compass of this essay for me to attempt even a sweeping survey of the actual information put together by occult research with reference to the early history of mankind long before the geological activities of the earth had prepared the continent of Europe for the more recent scenes of the protracted human drama. It would equally lie beyond the purpose of this essay to trace in detail that familiar course through higher planes of Nature which is traversed by each human soul when the physical body it has been animating for a time has been worn out and cast aside. All this is set forth at great length in the literature of modern occultism, but so little is this generally understood that it has seemed worth while to devote some effort to the interpretation of its general purpose, and with the fulfilment of this effort, so far as I have been able to accomplish it, I must, for the present, remain content.

# THE FUTURE LIFE OF ANIMALS

WHOEVER—being capable of serious thought—has ever loved and lost a dog, must have more or less earnestly pondered on the possibility that "the poor Indian" of Pope's essay may have been more wisely inspired than the poet, who seems to scorn his faith when he believed that

> ". . . . admitted to that equal sky,
> His faithful dog shall bear him company."

Attention has been specially turned to the problem by Mr Rider Haggard's experience in connection with the tragic death of his own favourite, an experience which the conventional reader of his letter to the *Times* may have thought strange and remarkable, but which, in truth, from the point of view of a somewhat higher knowledge, is merely an incident falling into its place in a considerable body of similar experiences with which students of super-physical phenomena are familiar. In Mr Haggard's case he had a vision in his sleep of the painful conditions under which his dog was killed, and later investigation showed that the vision corresponded with the facts.

As constituting the text on the basis of which I wish to set forth such knowledge as we really possess in reference to the after life of animals, it may be worth while at the outset to refer a little more in detail to the experience in question. The vision did not embrace all the circumstances of the

tragedy. The dog was dashed over a bridge by the engine of a passing train, and died of its injuries on the bank of a little river, or in the water, where he may have been finally drowned, though the medical evidence was to the effect that he must have been killed instantaneously by the shock of the accident on the railway. His master realised him as dying by the water-side or in the water, but did not cognise the preliminary shock. This omission precisely corresponds with the explanation which probably explains what happened. The vision evidently was the product of the story which the dog himself some hours after his physical death contrived to tell his master, to whom he had naturally returned in his new condition. Such a statement, of course, anticipates the main part of the explanation which has to be given. The fact that a dog may have a new life after the destruction of his physical body can only be understood in the light of a fairly complete comprehension of the principles governing spiritual evolution from the lower forms of conscious existence up to those with which humanity is concerned. And this essay will be directed to the elucidation of that stupendous process so far as may be necessary for the interpretation of the phenomena immediately under notice. But, granting for the moment the return of the dog in his astral body to the master he loved, he would only be able to tell so much of his story as he himself understood. The shock received from the passing train would not have left any definite impressions on his own consciousness, any more than similar shocks are remembered by human beings who experience them. Anyone, for instance, who has been nearly but not quite killed in a gunpowder explosion will remember sensations connected with his recovery of consciousness, but not with the shock itself. The dog, in the same way, was in his normal condition at one moment and the next was lying shattered and dying by the brink of the river. How

it came to pass that he was in that state would not have been within his own consciousness, and all that he could communicate to his master was the body of feeling he experienced while dying. This he did communicate very effectually, making his master feel as though he himself were undergoing the sufferings described.

This condition of things, again, corresponds with all similar experiences where only human beings are concerned. Anyone who has "passed on," as the phrase goes, to astral conditions of existence under painful circumstances, and who, with the "Ancient Mariner's" instinct, desires to pour his story into a sympathetic ear, will lead the person with whom he finds it possible to communicate to imagine himself going through the experiences described. A case lies within my own experience that illustrates the idea. A psychic friend went through a long series of connected dreams on one occasion, in which she imagined herself to have committed a murder, to have been arrested and tried, to have undergone sentence of death, and to have felt all the agonising terror of such a situation. She had, as a matter of fact, been approached on the astral plane during sleep by one who had actually gone through these experiences in life, and who told her pathetic story but too vividly.

Of course, in the attempt to elucidate experiences of this nature for the benefit of people who have not been used to investigating the phenomena of the unseen worlds around us, such statements as these are apt to be rather bewildering, but for students of the subject—a very considerable number in these days, although, unhappily, a small minority as yet of the cultivated world—the leading characteristics of the unseen world immediately around us are fairly well understood. It must not be supposed that the conditions on this so-called "astral plane" represent the ultimate possibilities of spiritual life. This unseen phase of our own world—

however rich in its content, varied in its character, and fascinating in its possibilities—is but the antechamber of spiritual regions very much more exalted. But it is not necessary to complicate the present explanation by ascending in imagination to these loftier realms. Although still quite a *terra incognita* for the world at large, this spiritual antechamber is well within the range of clairvoyant observation, and its scenery and inhabitants have been very fully described in the literature of occult science, so that although as regards human consciousness of the ordinary type it lies beyond the grave, it by no means shares the condition of that which is indeed "unknowable" for us at present, the ultimate possibilities of spiritual life.

Though much admired in the days of its usefulness, the phrase "unknowable" has contributed in no small degree to mislead modern intelligence. It is apt to represent for each writer who employs it the conditions of Nature which are unknown to him. For others, these may be as familiar as a foreign country frequently explored. Indeed, the more widely exploration is carried out in regions of Nature beyond the range of the physical senses, the more profoundly mysterious become the regions or conditions lying still further beyond. An old illustration serves best to convey the idea. From a low level of observation the horizon seems very near, from the point of view of a lofty peak it is enormously more expanded, but the wider the horizon becomes, the wider is the circle of ignorance; and the more profoundly spiritual investigation is pursued, the more deeply is the investigator impressed with the immensities of the universe he is unable to comprehend. The only idea which it is needful to emphasize for the moment is that the horizon line of the unknowable is continually shifting, as the knowledge of mankind approaches its maturity, so that very much which is quite unknown to the plodding conventionalist

(and with a conceit commensurate with his ignorance described by him as unknowable) is familiar ground for those who are a little further on in the direction of human maturity than himself.

Now the fact, to begin with, that on the astral plane some animals are recognised as continuing their existence just like human beings as far as that plane is concerned, is absolutely familiar to qualified students of the subject, and although it would not be true to say that every animal who dies off the physical plane continues a conscious existence on the astral, it would be necessary to draw the line rather low down amongst the varied species of the animal kingdom before we could say definitely that below that level no astral survival would be possible. Nature is nowhere fond of hard and fast lines. The colours of the spectrum, serviceable for so many suggestive analogies, will elucidate this amongst many other ideas. There is an undeniable difference between yellow and green, but in looking at a rainbow it is not easy to say at what precise place one colour changes into another. So with the question of the animal future. The intelligent and affectionate dog will be found after physical life on the astral plane as certainly as any human being. The same statement could not be made with the same certainty in regard to a slaughtered sheep or a pig. In truth, such animals do bequeath something to the astral plane, and influences, which, when the time comes for them to be properly understood, will perhaps induce a future humanity to revise many of its present customs in regard to such creatures. But carrying the conception down far lower again to that level of animal creation represented by lower reptiles or insects, assuredly there is no definite after-state of consciousness embodied in such forms. Even that last statement will require explanation and illustration before the whole story is thoroughly

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complete, but it may be left to stand as it is till then. Concerning ourselves for the moment merely with animals of the highest type, and especially with the dog as an illustration thereof, let us first enquire what it is in the dog, who enjoys an undeniable hereafter, which distinguishes him from the animal of the lower type whose consciousness has no specific future as such beyond the period of his physical existence. The question is not difficult to answer from the point of view of super-physical knowledge even in its present state, but the answer cannot very easily be rendered intelligible for those to whom the rudiments of such knowledge are unfamiliar without some preliminary explanations.

In its broadest outlines the idea that all animated creatures may be regarded as emanating in some mysterious fashion from the Divine Mind is almost a commonplace of metaphysical speculation. The omnipresence of the Deity is acknowledged throughout the religious world by the language of the lips, though the significance of the familiar phrase is hardly discerned in every case. But to a moderately advanced understanding all vital phenomena, even going down to those of the vegetable kingdom, represent in varying stages what, in oriental philosophy, is called the Descent of Spirit into Matter. That, so far as the deepest insight can enable us to realise, is the phrase which best represents the stupendous enterprise commonly spoken of in the West as "creation." Without attempting so extravagant a theory as one which would pretend to comprehend the ultimate divine purpose of creation, that which even limited observation enables us to perceive with definite certainty is that the animated life of this world is concerned with processes of spiritual evolution which run side by side with those more familiar to the science commonly called biology, relating to successive developments of form. Naturally the evolution of consciousness is a more subtle

process than that which has to do with the growth, from generation to generation, of improved animal bodies. But for the purposes of the study immediately in hand we need neither attempt to interpret its beginnings nor presume to forecast its ultimate purpose. That which does come within the range of what is definitely knowable for students properly gifted is this state of facts:—that spiritual energy clothes itself, on certain lofty planes of Nature, in vehicles of consciousness very varied in their character and design; and that some of these vehicles of consciousness, pouring down their influence on the material world, give rise to a multiplicity of forms, while others of a more highly developed order are related to but one physical being on this plane of life. In other words, there are some volumes of spiritual energy which give rise to, or animate, a considerable number of creatures belonging to the animal world, while other volumes (to use the only phrase that seems available, though it is very ill-adapted to suit the extreme subtlety of the idea) give rise in manifestation on this plane, to human beings whose individuality is maintained throughout the ages and is quite as recognisable (for those who can see) on the one plane as on the other. But the evolutionary process which is going on in the case of those volumes of energy, which animate large groups of animals, has for its purpose—to this extent we may quite confidentially venture to read the designs of Nature—the ultimate differentiation of specific portions, so to speak, which shall, when differentiated, enter on an existence in which individuality will never again be lost.

It is so important, with a view to the comprehension of the higher animal life, to understand this process aright that it may be worth while to attempt its exposition in another set of phrases. The soul of a human being is an entity, distinctly recognisable as such on higher planes of

Nature. From the commonplace point of view, people, unfamiliar with the facts, are fond of asserting that they lie in that favourite region, the Unknowable. Undoubtedly there is much connected with the possibilities of ultimate spiritual development which is unknown at present even by those who possess extensive information concerning the unseen world. But the conditions of human consciousness immediately succeeding physical dissolution, and even for a considerable range of progress beyond that limit, are absolutely familiar to many people qualified to deal with such researches. Now the consciousness which is the essential attribute of each human soul clothes itself in successive vehicles of subtle matter as it ascends through the various planes of Nature, which it is qualified by its development to reach, and always such vehicles are peculiar to itself. The liberated soul is as much an entity on the higher spiritual planes above the astral as during its existence in the physical body. Its spiritual body is as definite a possession of its own as its flesh and bones were here. But this is not precisely the case with animal consciousness, unless, as we shall see directly, that has attained to the very highest levels of its possible development in that kingdom. The animal consciousness may, indeed, and in most cases does, exist in a more or less drowsy fashion for relatively brief periods after the death of the body on the astral plane. But when, in turn, this period of existence is past, the consciousness is not sufficiently evolved, as a rule, to exist in a vehicle of its own on the higher plane. It merges itself in what may be thought of as a spiritual envelope embracing the consciousness of a great many animals of varying types. This spiritual aggregation has often been spoken of in the literature of the subject as the "common-soul" of an animal group, and with the explanation thus given that phrase will probably be intelligible.

Such common-souls have been undergoing a protracted evolution over vast periods of time. It is not necessary for our present purpose to attempt an explanation of their actual origin. In any given case we may recognise them as having been concerned, at earlier periods of the world's history, with the animation of animal forms belonging to the humbler types of that kingdom, but existence even in humble animal forms involves something in the nature of experience; and just as in the case of the human soul all the experience gathered during each life contributes to the enlargement and expansion of faculty and character, so, in their humble way, the contributions that each animal is enabled to make, go to enlarge the possibilities with which the common-soul is endowed, and thus, as the ages roll on, each such common-soul becomes qualified to animate animals of a higher and higher type. And concurrently with the advance of human civilisation and the development of relations between the human and the animal world beyond those of the hunter and the hunted, it comes to pass that the most advanced animals associated with any definite group become gradually more and more individualised. Keeping our attention fixed upon conditions that are intelligible at the present day, we are enabled to observe that such animals as come into close and intimate relations with the higher human order (three kinds especially may be mentioned—the dog, the horse, and the cat) become qualified to go through an experience which the earlier arieties of animal existence did not provide for. They become qualified to develop the emotion of love for a being higher in the scale of Nature than themselves. This is tantamount to the awakening within them of the greatest potentiality derived from their actual origin as an emanation of Divinity. For this main thought must never be lost sight of in studying the processes of life wherever these are

carried on. The divine influence is ever present, however obscured by conditions or latent—as the possibilities of the plant are latent in the seed. Now, when the differentiation of one of the higher animals in any group has been completely carried out, the volume of consciousness constituting the soul of such an animal is capable of an independent existence on the higher plane, and in that condition has begun its career of individual immortality; has become ready for incarnation in the human form, with all the stupendous possibilities before it which are associated with that condition of existence.

It does not follow that such transition from one kingdom of Nature to the other is immediately accomplished. One of the difficulties connected with the presentation of truths concerning the higher activities of Nature which stand in the way of rendering them intelligible outside the circle of special students has to do with the necessity for dealing with enormous periods of time, and with the necessity of recognising that such periods have very different meanings for the different planes of Nature on which consciousness may function. It may be that the newly differentiated soul of a dog, too far advanced ever again to inhabit an animal form, will find no opportunity in the present condition of the world for incarnation in humanity. The lower types of humanity around us in savage conditions are far too low down in their own development to afford opportunities for the progress of such animals as we are thinking of, whose consciousness is filled with a glow of beautiful emotion which the savage would be quite incapable of understanding. But the animal in question could hardly be evolved sufficiently along the lines of mental development to be ripe for an incarnation amongst civilised mankind. He must, therefore, await the opening of a new chapter in the whole human story, and this will not be ready to begin

until a very remote period. Meanwhile that animal soul in question need not be regarded as prejudiced by the delay. It exists in a condition of as much beatitude as its progress will allow of, and, although awaiting further progress until opportunity serves, it may rather be congratulated on its period of rest than pitied on account of its inactivity.

As usual, however, between the two extreme conditions of any process under examination, intermediate possibilities arise. The extremes we have here to deal with are, in the first case, the simple failure of the animal to differentiate, and the return of its consciousness to the common-soul of the animal group to which it has belonged; on the other hand, the actual establishment on the spiritual plane of a new entity ready for human incarnation. It may happen, however, where attachment between the differentiating animal and his own especial human friend has been very intense, that the animal will actually be drawn back into incarnation in a similar animal form in association with the human being either during that life or in the course of another. In this way, some few among our higher domesticated pets may actually be thought of as reincarnating entities, although it is in a high degree improbable that such reincarnations would be more than at most once or twice repeated. And again, a possibility arises which has been known to bring about what seems a very wonderful result. Where the tie of affectionate devotion is very close on both sides, as between the animal and his master, it is just possible that the animal will reincarnate as a human being concurrently with the next reincarnation of the man, in some race sufficiently raised above the mere savage condition to make it possible for him to find an opening there; and in such cases the intricate influences which control and mould human affairs in accordance with the karmic programme, or let us say the providential design,

will bring the new human entity into personal relations with the older one to whom he owes his humanity. Again, it is just possible that animals below the rank of those few who come most closely into touch with humanity may, by the development in a less perfect way of the love principle amongst themselves, actually become reincarnating entities before it is possible for them to develop an entirely independent vehicle of consciousness on the spiritual plane. Physical analogies which would help to render the idea intelligible are apt to be misleading, but such partially differentiated animals may be thought of as clinging like a bubble to the surface of the subtle envelope of the common-soul, not yet sufficiently developed to fly off on their own account.

I have spoken of three animals familiar to ourselves as amongst those which are capable of differentiation under human influence. There is one other which undeniably belongs to the same rank, the elephant; but he is not sufficiently understood in the West, as a general rule, to be much worth talking about in this connection. He is worth mentioning, however, because such mention will help to emphasise an important consideration to which our attention has not yet been turned. All these vast processes of natural evolution proceed along appropriate lines, so to speak, and the animal soul whose highest achievement, for example, would be the animation of horses, would not also be concerned with the animation of dogs, cats, or elephants. Each of these four animals must be thought of as the head animal of its own series. To trace out the series of which in each case each such animal is the head would be a task of extreme difficulty, and the results of such an effort would seem very bewildering because they would not have any reference whatever to similarity of form. The one thought which it is always necessary to keep clearly in view if we

would understand the scheme of Nature aright, is the one which unhappily the modern biologist entirely overlooks. The evolution of form proceeds along one line of rails, so to speak, the evolution of spiritual consciousness animating such forms may follow a course almost at right angles to the other progress, or inclined, at all events, at an angle approximating to that. In other words, the progressing spiritual consciousness may find an appropriate opportunity for gathering experience in one animal form, and next time may find its slightly more advanced opportunity in a form of a totally different character. Just as, in the human case, a soul may incarnate at one period along one line of ancestry, at another find its appropriate habitat in a different part of the world and even a different race.

And now we come to the moral to be deduced from all these observations, a moral which ordinary mankind is at present as little capable of suspecting as of investigating the phenomena. The cultivation of animal consciousness up to the conditions in which it is capable of advancing along the loftier lines of progress is the task assigned by Nature to the human family. It is a task which the human family at present not only fails to accomplish, except in a few cases by accident, but is for the most part offending against and defying in many more ways than one. Animals collectively ought to be regarded by mankind as pupils or apprentices to life. It has not yet been held incompatible with the highest civilisation to regard them, for the most part, as so much material for the exercise of the savage instinct. The sportsman, is is true, who takes pleasure in killing his humbler fellow creatures, and who in doing so is saturating the animal souls to which they belong with an instinct, in reference to humanity, distinctly prejudicial to their evolutionary growth, is not necessarily a criminal. He is simply undeveloped to that extent, incapable of comprehending

his place in Nature, of the loftier duties attaching to his station. This thought applies to the present condition of mankind in a great many ways. The occult student is painfully aware of the fact that his contemporaries, for the most part, are at a very early stage of their course through the ages. The modern world, so to speak, is streaked with divine rays of intelligence, manifesting themselves in very beautiful action, even on the part of those who in other respects represent a deplorably backward condition, and many offenders against the natural design, as it affects the relation between mankind and the animal world, exhibit in many of their activities, accomplishments of spiritual progress the value of which they themselves are as yet quite unable to comprehend. But concurrently with such achievements, they do sometimes blunder about, for want of more exact super-physical knowledge, in a very deplorable and extraordinary fashion.

Anyhow, the habit of taking pleasure in the destruction of animal life is amongst the most disgusting, from the occultist's point of view, of those which blot the pages recording the doctrines of current morality. One must equally recognise that the slaughter of animals for food is another bequest from a barbarous age, which must of necessity be abandoned as a practice when human understanding is a little more illuminated. From the point of view of a very imperfect comprehension of the way in which the world is governed, some people to whom these views may be unacceptable will ask why such practices are "allowed" if they interfere with the progress of the whole evolutionary design. They might as well contend that murder and theft are approved of because they also are allowed by Providence to take place. The underlying principle which all study of Nature in its highest aspects enforces on the observation of the occult student is that

somehow it is necessary to let mankind blunder on in darkness and ignorance for a time, multiplying its mistakes as it proceeds, bearing their consequences in the shape of manifold suffering, and even distributing superfluous suffering around, the sight of which, for those who can see, is amongst the saddest aspects of the whole drama. But no less certain than the fact that ignorance and stupidity give rise to suffering is the ultimate prospect of its amelioration in the days to come when wisdom and enlightenment shall reign.

# THE INTELLECTUAL PROGRESS OF ANIMALS

SOME striking stories have been current in the papers within the last few months concerning dogs and horses showing an unusual degree of intelligence, and no one who has been amused during the few years with watching the performances of trained animals on the stage can have been otherwise than struck by the feeling that something must be going on in the animal world corresponding to the growth of human intelligence so conspicuous during the last few generations. Studies connected with human evolution, which must for convenience be referred to as lying within the domain of occult science, although there is really nothing hidden or melodramatic about them, have thrown many sidelights on the evolution of the animal kingdom, which, of course, in reality links itself with that of the human race in a manner which ordinary biologists do not yet exactly understand, but in a way which ordinary biology will, to a certain extent, prepare the mind for comprehending. Before dealing, however, with any abstract conclusions derived from scientific study, it may be well to recall the reader's attention to the striking cases which have lately attracted notice, and to describe the circumstances connected with one other within the writer's knowledge, which has not yet been the subject of public notoriety. The dog whose achievements have been specially attracting notice in

America is known as "Bozzie," and her owner, Mr Clason, resides at Chicago. The dog is described as being able to count, solve mental problems in addition, multiplication and subtraction, to tell the time correctly and spell various words. Bozzie, if asked, when several people have come to witness her performances, "How many are present?" will glance round the room and indicate the number by a series of short barks. On one occasion someone asked her what was the result of $3 - 1 \times 2$, and, after a moment's pause she barked four times. Letters of the alphabet scattered on the ground enable Bozzie to answer questions in spelling, and emphatic assurance is given by those who have witnessed her powers that Mr Clason does not communicate with the dog by any signals to indicate what her answer should be. Indeed, Bozzie answers mental questions, and we read in one account of her doings that Mr Clason wrote on a piece of paper, "Mentally tell Bozzie to bring this morning's paper," and passed the slip to a visitor. The man looked at the dog for a few minutes and mentally made the demand. Bozzie wagged her tail knowingly, and soon returned with the morning's paper. In reference to this, writers commenting on the story, and exhibiting as they do so a complete misapprehension of the phenomenon under observation, regard this final claim that the dog is a mind reader as more absurd and extravagant than any other. For those who know a little more about the working of animal consciousness, mind-reading is a very much simpler performance than arithmetical calculation. We will come back to that idea in dealing with another dog nearer home.

Meanwhile Berlin has been excited by the doings of a horse named "Hans," the property of a certain Herr von Oston. He, it is alleged, can count up to one hundred, giving the required number of stamps with his fore-foo He can recognise people by their portraits, and has a

musical ear, being able to recognise various melodies. He also, like Bozzie the dog, spells out names with pasteboard letters. The conventional critic, always eager to account for anything he does not understand, by the assumption that somebody is cheating, has, of course, declared that Herr von Oston has a series of signals by means of which he controls the action of his horse. Correspondents, however, writing from Berlin on the subject, declare that Hans has been able to reply to the questions of strangers even in the absence of his owner.

We come now to the consideration of the intellectual progress exhibited by a little fox terrier called "Bob," whose performances have been witnessed by a personal friend of the writer. Bob resides with the ladies who belong to him, at a place in Normandy, from which, having once crossed the water with Bob, it is impossible they can return. That would involve the subjection of Bob to the ignominies of quarantine. On the face of things, Bob can do sums in arithmetic, spell any name he is asked for, and exhibit a general knowledge of public affairs made manifest in this way. A number of cards on which are written the names of the principal cities of Europe are thrown at random on the floor. Bob is asked, "Where is Louvre?" or where is "Westminster Abbey?" or "Where do the Moujiks come from?" and so on, whereupon he rushes always with eager confidence to the card belonging to the name of the appropriate city, pawing it with enthusiasm accompanied with vocal demonstrations which show the excitement of his own mind. His feats of spelling indicate quite plainly the method by which he works. He does not spell a name by quite the same method as that which a human being would employ, because he does not even require to hear the sound of the word. For example, in the case of the lady from whom we derive first-hand testimony on the subject, he was

asked by his mistress, "What is this lady's name?" and immediately proceeded to spell a Christian name—*i.e.* its usual diminutive—employed in her family. In another case a man had called to interview Bob and had sent in his card. Bob's mistress held the card in her hand when the visitor had entered and simply asked Bob, "What is this gentleman's name?" Bob proceeded to spell it, and it was a long name, quite correctly.

All this, of course, shows the student of psychological mysteries that the dog works by picking up the idea in his mistress's mind by virtue of that faculty which it is the fashion now to call "mind reading," but is merely in truth one of the manifestations of the clairvoyant power so irregularly distributed as yet among the living inhabitants of this world. People who represent conventional ignorance in its purest form may disbelieve in the existence of the faculty of clairvoyance, but such an attitude of mind is unworthy of serious attention on the part of those who are better educated. In various ways the existence of the faculty has been demonstrated hundreds of times in connection with studies having to do with mesmerism and its allied phenomena. The work of Dr Gregory fifty years ago ought to be convincing in itself. The well-recorded examples of clairvoyance exhibited by the Frenchman Alexis, [illegible] voluminous literature of the French mesmerists [illegible] be referred to by anyone honestly requir[illegible]he problems concerned. But all student[illegible]e aware that, within the limits of their intelligence, [illegible]s frequently exhibit the clairvoyant faculty, and, inde[illegible] many such observers have been inclined to suppose that all animals possess it in a greater or less degree. Horses exhibit it very frequently, and will shy at objects invisible to ordinary sight, as human clairvoyants with them at the time in such cases have often

declared. But a closer examination of the subject will show that the faculty is irregularly distributed in the animal kingdom even as amongst human creatures, although, in all probability, it is more generally diffused to a crude and imperfect extent in the animal kingdom than amongst human kind. As an illustration of the fact that some dogs possess it and some do not, I may mention the case of a clairvoyant friend in whose house an astral appearance representing a former owner is frequently to be seen by those who are adequately gifted. This appearance can hardly be described as a ghost, because it is not visible to ordinary eyesight, but, as I say, it is quite visible to the master of the house, who, I need hardly mention, is no more disturbed by it than by the passing of a cloud across the sky. The only people who are frightened of such appearances are those who are ignorant enough to pretend that they disbelieve in them. Well, my friend has two big dogs always about the house, and one of these will always show by getting up and looking in the right direction, sometimes also by a little bristling of his hair, that he also sees the semi-visible ghost. But the other dog does not, and will walk through it perfectly unconcerned. Now, the clairvoyant faculty that would enable the dog to see some of the appearances around us, generally invisible to common-place people, would, if that faculty [illegible] sociated with a somewhat unusual degree [illegible] igence, become a mind-reading dog like [illegible] human life a person who would be able [illegible] appearance would in very many cases [illegible] able to read a thought in another person's mind, and the mind-reading explanation of Bob's performances is immeasurably the most simple, besides being the only one which fits the facts.

But a thought may arise in connection with these pretty

little stories of animal intelligence which is more interesting than the mere idea that animals exhibit the clairvoyant gift. That alone would not enable Bozzie and Bob to perform their feats if they had not at the same time evolved an unusual degree of brain intelligence. Now the fact in the "Bob" case, at all events, which goes to support this part of the idea is that his performances, to use the sympathetic language of his human friends, "take it out of Bob" too much to allow of their very frequent repetition. His eyes become blood-shot as a consequence of the mental strain, and a letter just received from his mistress while we are writing says: "I hasten to answer your note about Bob, who, I am happy to say, is well, though we have to keep him quiet, and not exercise his brain." Incidentally, however, in the same letter, his mistress remarks: "After the Hôtel du Palais was burned at Biarritz, I mixed up the letters comprising 'incendie' and said, 'Bob,' spell the French word for 'fire,' and he did it correctly." That, of course, was a direct achievement of mind-reading, but at the same time, these instances show a state of consciousness on the dog's part bracketing the shape of the letters on the cardboard slips with the thoughts in his mistress's mind, which represent an intellectual exercise enormously in advance of those which have in the darker ages of animal and human intelligence been supposed to represent all that an animal could accomplish.

The real truth of the matter is this, that just as the intelligence of the human species, plus higher faculties that exist with them as yet in little better than the germ state, are going through a steady process of growth and development, so, in a precisely corresponding way, are the higher representatives of the animal kingdom following in their footsteps. If we carry the retrospect back to earlier periods of this earth's condition—to those, for example,

which correspond with the presence on earth of the huge and shapeless "antediluvian" beasts—we shall in imagination see a world in which the men were little better than brutes and the animals no better, at all events, than the reptiles of our own period. A modern dog is as great an advance on a dinosaurus as a senior wrangler on such men as bequeathed their skulls to the tertiary formation. Can any observer of Nature be so dull-witted as to suppose that the processes of improvement that have thus been going on for the last "x" number of millenniums has reached its culmination or come to a premature standstill? Of course, it is still in activity,—this process of animal improvement,—and those who can read the future by the light of a somewhat better comprehension of the present than is generally diffused around us, look forward with entire confidence to a time in which the higher animals at some future date will be capable, shall we say, of serving an advanced humanity with as much intelligence as at present is exhibited by the less intelligent of our domestic servants at the present day. We need not rely merely on such cases as those of Bozzie and Bob, or of Hans the horse, in support of this conjecture. Wherever animals are now trained to go through performances on the stage, their capacity to respond to training seems an ever-growing wonder. Within recent years a troop of dogs practically acted a little play amongst themselves, on the stage of a London theatre, quite without guidance from human beings. Thick-headed observers, no doubt, put all these performances down to the credit of the trainer, who, no doubt, is fairly entitled to some part thereof. But it is quite certain that he would not have succeeded equally with all dogs alike. In the course of his work he will have discerned great differences of aptitude amongst his canine pupils, probably giving up some as unteachable, that is to say, as having been insufficiently endowed with

those characteristics of brain, whatever they may be, which represent the advance of the great evolutionary wave.

Of course there are morals to be derived from the observation of such interesting cases as those that have passed under review in these pages. Morals are always cropping up when we contemplate the facts of Nature in the light of a little better understanding than is generally as yet diffused around us. But the moral in this case will hardly be intelligible without a good deal of explanation which would perhaps be out of place just here. Enough to say, that the care and affection bestowed upon such animals as these under notice contribute directly to promote the purpose of Nature in regard to the evolution of the animal kingdom. The growing intelligence of the dog is the response to the sympathy directed towards him by his human belongings. No effort to cultivate his intelligence is wasted in the long run; no such efforts should be regarded as simply giving rise to an amusing trick. Their consequences may be as far-reaching as those of the spoken or written word amongst ourselves. "I shot an arrow into the air," says Longfellow, in connection with a precisely similar thought, and everyone knows the simple moral of the verses which that line begins, the same which may be attached to the spoken word of those who put forward their thoughts with an earnest purpose. The same moral may be derived from the study of animal intelligence directed even by the thoughtless impulse of those who, for the most part, have been concerned with animal training, but likely to assume a much more important aspect when the evolutionary consequences,—or what it is, perhaps, hardly an exaggeration to say, the spiritual results,—of such efforts come to be properly understood.

# THE PURPOSE OF KNOWLEDGE

THE recent occupation of Cambridge by the British Association has given rise to some revival of the never-ending dispute concerning the relative value of classical and scientific knowledge. A clever journalist has reflected in the columns of the *Daily Mail* the scornful opinions concerning "the awful jargon" of the scientific magnates entertained by a venerable professor devoted to the classics, the Rev. J. E. B. Mayor, of St John's. In the proceedings of the Association he could find "neither pleasure nor understanding." He considered the exponents of science "incapable of expressing themselves in language intelligible to educated men. . . . I really think they ought to make it their business, in the interests of science—which we must suppose exists for humanity—to express themselves in such a fashion as scholars at least can understand."

The complaint, of course, will be exceedingly amusing to the men of science, who will regard the scholar's inability to understand them as a brilliant illustration of the worthlessness of the mental culture to which he has been devoted; and if he is fairly represented by his interviewer, his position is unsound to the outer limits of absurdity. He seems to fancy that a growing disbelief in the supreme importance of Latin and Greek is due simply to a desire that boys may be taught French and German instead. He has not begun to perceive that it is due to a vague feeling

that the comprehension of Nature—of the laws controlling human life and guiding the evolution of the world around us—is becoming supremely important, for generations now enabled to approach that comprehension much more nearly than was possible for their predecessors during the last dozen centuries. The earlier theory of mental culture rested on the belief that the study of language, *per se,* and the intricacies of grammar, enlarged and developed the powers of the mind, while familiarity with the two great languages of antiquity introduced the student to magnificent schemes of philosophical thought, that could not be neglected by the aspirant to genuine culture. While scientific knowledge was still in its infancy, that theory held the field. Only those who were impelled by inner forces they did not yet understand were induced to throw aside the records of ancient wisdom and concentrate their efforts on the interrogation of Nature by experimental methods. For them the mere grammarian was a blear-eyed "dry-as-dust," an ignoramus in spite of his boasted "scholarship," blind to the glimmer of the new light shining through the crevices of the curtain concealing true knowledge. The thinkers of the past were fossil remnants of an age gone by. In so far as it might be worth while to absorb the fruit of their thinking, unripe as this could not but be by reason of the backward state of natural science at the Grecian period, it was always possible to drain ancient wisdom dry with the help of translations. If the so-called "scholars" scoffed at translations, they were unconsciously condemning their own scholarship. What could that be worth if it did not enable the possessors to make accurate translations?

The champions of classical culture meanwhile had all the advantages accruing from the solidity of the citadel they defended. Only a few rebels against constituted authority had insolently assaulted the virgin fortress; no one had

dreamed of questioning its invulnerable character. Classical scholarship was the only mental furniture that could be identified with true education. The scholar regarded all other kinds as on a level with the tricks of a performing poodle. By dint of repeating the creed of the colleges—I believe in Greek and Latin as the only mental food productive of intellectual culture—he induced many innocent people to accept it for gospel, and all the vested interests of the scholastic profession were enlisted on his side. But the assailants of the fortress were constantly gaining reinforcements; the weapons of attack were constantly exhibiting improvement; the walls crumbling before their attack could never be strengthened. The garrison had no fresh material to use for repairing the breaches. If the attacking force had cared to persevere there could only have been one result to chronicle. But they became a host in themselves, satisfied with the cities in their own occupation and with the allegiance of the country people. We may drop the metaphor. The conflict between science and the classics in the domain of education has subsided because science has gained all it cared to win—abundant opportunity for its own expansion and the respect of the world. The scholar is politely left in his own retirement, content with the admiration he bestows on his own image in the glass.

But in truth the representatives of the newer culture are in danger of developing a new bigotry, and, foolish as the fancy may be which tends to disparage the effect of scientific study as an influence for the enlargement of the mind and understanding, ridiculous as the assumption may be which affects to recognise this influence as emanating from the study of classical languages alone, the modern scientific student is often as little illuminated as the Greek professor whom he would think of as a fossil, by any guiding

principle in the pursuit of knowledge. He may quite unconsciously have been driven forward by an evolutionary law compelling him to pave the way for successors of more enlightened purpose, but it is perfectly true that, fascinating as it may be to its devotees, detailed knowledge concerning the attributes of physical matter, however invigorating its pursuit may be to the mind of the pursuer, does not in itself conduce to any final result comparable in dignity with those aimed at, however vainly, by the metaphysicians of the ancient world. The Cambridge professor whose incapacity to understand the "jargon" of the British Association is so amusing, despises the activity of the scientist—if he is correctly reported—because (with the arrogance so characteristic of defective information) he declares "there will be no satisfying life's mystery until the awakening of death," so he thinks that science had better give up all further attempts to penetrate the secrets of Nature, and be content with the humble tranquillity of the Christian faith.

The idea embodied in these few words is as unsound as any which language could frame, but the deeply-seated fallacy in the argument is, perhaps, overlooked by many of those (obeying a healthy impulse without knowing why) whom the classical professor endeavours to annihilate. Unless, indeed, there were hope of unveiling "Life's Mystery" by the ceaseless and indefatigable interrogation of Nature—then, indeed, physical science would be a barren and unprofitable pursuit. But the assertion that the mystery never will be unveiled by scientific effort is no less ludicrous in the sight of those who have already to some extent been enabled to lift the veil, than the Professor's calm assumption that "the awakening of death" will invest the man who "passes on" with a full comprehension of the mysteries in question. His charge against the scientists has, indeed, a

sharper point than he supposes. That with which he thinks to wound them is not a point at all, but many of them are unaware of the possibilities that really give importance to scientific research. Just because that will in the long run inevitably bring them into touch with the solutions of some among life's mysteries, their pursuits are the most important with which the present generation can be engaged.

And now, parting company with the antiquated controversy concerning the relative merits of classical and scientific culture as merely rival methods of educating the understanding, let us see if it is possible to frame a real theory concerning the purpose of knowledge from the point of view of the ulterior results. Some of the platitudes of primitive religious thinking may, indeed, cast light on the enquiry. The humble faith of the Christian, at all events, points to the continuity of life in some ill-comprehended condition after the "awakening of death." And the only surprising fact in that connection that we have to consider is the extraordinary neglect of that belief which the humble Christian, as a general rule, exhibits in his daily life. If the faith were held in a tenacious grasp, the interests of a brief life of a few decades would sink into insignificance beside the preparation for that larger life assumed to be eternal in duration, but the conditions of which are also assumed to be depending a good deal on such preparation. By some Christians, indeed, the answer would be that they do not depend upon action in this life but merely on divine grace, to be procured by lip-service and declarations of belief. But this theory does not really find any logical support in experience, because those who profess it most earnestly are certainly amongst those who seek by good lives here to prepare themselves for beatitude hereafter. If they believed what they say, the effort to lead good lives would be wasted trouble. The illogicality of the others is

too glaring to need comment. But with how many is the professed faith in a future life really held? Their conduct in a huge majority of cases seems to imply that a grievous doubt on the subject paralyses their behaviour, leading to the practical compromise so many people make with their consciences, making the best of circumstances while the physical life lasts, and putting in a sort of insurance against the risks of immortality by moderate concessions to the higher dictates of religion. The devotees of science, on the other hand, may be divided into two great classes—those who combine with scientific study pursued from the mere love of intellectual activity, the Christianity-and-water just described, and those who are frankly agnostic—who, if they go to church at all, do so simply on the same principle which leads them to wear frock coats in London—the impulse to do so being no more worthy of respect than that which leads the ladies of their families to follow the prevailing fashion in the drapery of their limbs.

These varied attitudes of mind are one and all as unhealthy as ignorance can render them. If it should be possible for a later generation, looking back upon this age from a level of human development illuminated by true knowledge concerning the ultimate destinies of humanity, to shape their course in life by the light of such knowledge, they will wonder at the marvellous apathy shown by our contemporaries as a rule in reference to possibilities of acquiring the all-important knowledge scintillating around us. For knowledge as such to an immortal being is of no value at all unless it has some bearing on the conditions and prospects of his immortality. That does not mean, that the sensible course to pursue is to neglect whatever knowledge may be available, and to be content with a faith which has no definite outlines, and is proved by the experience of the world at large to be inoperative as a rule of

life,—but it means that any fragments of knowledge which really have a direct bearing on the problems of the future are more precious than any abundance of other knowledge relating merely to transient interests, that will be for all of us as though they had never troubled us, a hundred years hence.

Have any fragments of such knowledge yet come into our possession? If so, what kind of effort and research will be best conducive to their expansion? If not, what activities of the intellect will afford the best hope of reaching to such knowledge eventually?

Of course, it would be affectation to suppress the conviction entertained by the present writer and by large numbers of people engaged in similar pursuits, to the effect that no mere fragments, but a very considerable volume of such knowledge, is already in our possession. To begin with, there are, as everyone knows, many millions of people in this country and America who are absolutely satisfied by personal experience that friends and relations of theirs who have "died" are able still to communicate with them, and eager to maintain that, far from being dead, really they are more alive than ever. The stupid herd of outsiders who ridicule these assurances are as little worthy of attention as the cattle booing in a field. The multitudes of the intervening class who have had no personal experience, but are capable of appreciating the force of evidence and reason, could easily satisfy themselves that the convictions referred to are well founded by reading a few books on the subject. But although there is a great gulf between those who *know* that the future life is a reality, and those—the pupils of the churches,—who merely attempt to insure against the possibility that it may be so,—the familiar methods of popular enquiry into the conditions of the life to come have been painfully unsuccessful as regards the evolution of any view

of the future that can be treated as a "self-sufficing system of belief," to quote Mr Balfour's phrase. The Spiritualists have established with a certainty that the world at large is far as yet from appreciating the fact that human consciousness survives the change called death in all cases. But only by a small body as yet, the *élite* of the spiritualistic world (for the Occultist only differs from the ordinary Spiritualist in knowing a little more), have the conditions of that after state been studied in the way which leads to extended knowledge, concerning not merely the fact of survival, but the laws which govern survival and the developments of the life hereafter. It is only the occultist so far who has been able to survey the scheme of human evolution as a whole, to comprehend its origins, and foresee the potentialities of its ultimate progress, and it is only *this* knowledge that really at last begins to cast a clear light on the road to be travelled, which effectually links the activities of this life with their consequences in others, and puts the human being for the first time in touch with ideas that may vitally determine his destinies, and darken or brighten his future.

It is not necessary for the elucidation of the present argument to embody in this essay a complete exposition of the great scheme of human evolution which occult study has enabled some of us to comprehend in outline. But it may be possible to say enough concerning the broad design of that evolution to cover the purpose immediately in hand —the definition of the real motives which, apart from the gratification of the moment, render the acquisition of knowledge desirable. "The gratification of the moment," in the sense of the phrase just used, is all that the average man of culture of our own time—whether he be scientist or scholar—is in the habit of thinking of. The "moment" is his current physical life—but a oment in his existence if

he be really an immortal being. And who among either scientists or scholars stop to ask themselves how far the knowledge they spend so much pains in acquiring will help on their progress in another state of existence? The unintellectual, humble-minded devotee, however unconscious of the laws he is invoking, is by one degree more sensible, for his life does take cognisance of the future as something to be thought about in advance, however little his thoughts may divine its programme correctly.

To begin with, the fundamental oversight which leads the ordinary cultured world astray is the neglect of the root idea of natural evolution—the continued growth, under the law of Reincarnation, of the spiritual ego of each human being. The whole subject must be made a study in itself before the absolute truth and certainty that human evolution is carried on by the method of repeated immersion in physical life is borne in on the understanding. But once firmly lodged there, the all-important deductions swiftly follow. The development of the civilised from the savage races becomes a process clearly visible to the mind's eye. And the certainty that the great process of development has not yet touched its final possibilities becomes no less glaringly obvious. Imagination puts no limit on the ultimate design of Nature with respect to human progress, —meaning by that phrase not a mere appearance on the earth at some future date of a race far superior to our own, but the improvement of *ourselves* in later incarnations in a manner which may render us beings as much higher in the scale of existence than our present selves, as we are already higher than the humblest savage we can think of.

But it will, perhaps, be suggested,—if we have been brought forward by the great forces of natural evolution from the condition of the lowest savage to that at which we now stand, the admiration of all beholders, why cannot we

comfortably trust those same forces to complete the great work and invest us with the sublime characteristics which should be possessed by the advanced humanity of the future? The answer correctly appreciated embodies the conclusion towards which all these reflections have been tending. The characteristics that have been developed in humanity so far, however highly we may estimate them, when we look on at the most gifted men of science for example, or even the most accomplished scholars, are of a humble order compared to those which still await development. They all have to do with the growth of the brain as an instrument of thought, they have little or nothing to do with the development of higher vehicles of consciousness that must work with the brain in the more advanced mankind of the future, nothing to do with the senses that take cognisance of higher regions of consciousness of which the physical senses cannot take note. The improved man of the future must not only possess those mental faculties which we look at now as characteristics of the intellect, he must train and develop an entirely new set of faculties as well, those which will enable him during physical life to take cognisance of the loftier planes of Nature with which at present he has some acquaintanceship during the intervals between his physical incarnations, but of which he has remained quite unconscious hitherto, while *in* incarnation, —because he has never struggled to obtain the control of his higher senses. And to be fit to take his place in the improved humanity of the future, he must enjoy—besides the mental fruit of a highly cultivated intellect—the interior resources which will make him clairvoyant in regard to all that passes in any part of the earth—that will give him a clear insight into the character and state of evolution of anyone at whom he looks, just as his physical sight now enables him to see through glass or water that is perfectly

transparent. Nor are such faculties more than the mere external trifles that will accrue to the man of the future,—foreshadowed in their nature by the imperfect faculties of that kind already manifesting here and there amongst people endowed with physical qualifications. The loftier growth of mental consciousness will have to do with the comprehension of divine mysteries (as most people regard them now), which must cease to be mysteries for the perfected humanity destined to reign on earth one day.

Spiritual growth of the kind here faintly sketched is not to be imposed on a conscious being by the pressure of an external law, as the improvement of animal forms is worked out by forces guiding physical evolution. Up to the level (roughly speaking) at which civilised humanity now stands, Nature has, so to speak, driven her children along an appointed path. Before they can go much further—or any further at all—they must begin to exert themselves so as to co-operate intelligently with the natural influence. They can only do this if they understand the scheme of evolution as a whole. They can only exert themselves to any good effect if they set the goal plainly before the eye of imagination. Unless a considerable volume of that knowledge which is now accumulating on the hands of occult students becomes pretty widely diffused among the advance guard of humanity, humanity will make no further progress worth speaking of.

Nor is this a mere dogmatic assertion claiming to be the result of information or reasoning held in reserve. It is an appreciation of natural principles that can easily be comprehended. In saying that the law of evolution has brought humanity up to the levels on which we stand now, without any conscious help from the entities concerned, we express the exact truth. But the entities concerned have been helping, nevertheless, though unconsciously. The human

Ego—the permanent spiritual being that grows during successive incarnations—never acquires any attribute that it does not aspire to. But the mere experience and circumstances of the physical life prompt the aspirations that make for the progress of the physical intellect. The savage who studies the spoor of the animals he hunts, is training or beginning to train his intelligence, and his permanent ego —himself—profits by such training. The greatest intellects amongst us are the consequences of intellectual effort in former lives. The finest artistic genius is the product of causes set in motion by the possessor at a previous stage of his progress,—as definitely and simply as the cloud is the consequence of certain conditions connected with temperature and moisture. And our straightforward desires in the ordinary life, for the gratification of the moment, lead us to set in motion, by effort and aspiration, the causes which give rise to such progress as can be represented in the capacities of the physical brain. In this way we have unwittingly co-operated with Nature in accomplishing that element in spiritual growth which has to do with the capacities of the mind as directed to material objects.

But we cannot provide such co-operation in reference to the kind of spiritual growth which transcends the objects of material sense unless we begin with an intellectual appreciation of the progress to be desired ; and as yet it is only among a few—compared with the majority of the cultured world—that enough is known concerning even the psychic (not to speak of the spiritual) possibilities of human growth to engender the specific desires and aspirations that can alone promote such growth. The science of the subject is well appreciated by the few in question. Those who already possess psychic qualifications are the very few who in lives passed ages ago were already inspired with a belief that it was possible to penetrate the mysteries of Nature beyond the

range of the physical senses, who made efforts (within the scope of such knowledge as they then possessed) to get in this way behind the scenes of the material world. Such efforts may not have been successful at the time, but in themselves they constituted a force that promoted evolution along those lines, and have in some such cases given rise to endowments in the present period, the ultimate value of which, as indicating the commencement of a higher evolution, is beyond the reach of exaggeration. It is true, indeed, that where the *motive* in a former life that has prompted any such persons to seek abnormal faculties or powers has been of an unworthy order, the psychic faculties so acquired may almost be a snare in their path. Loftiness of aim must accompany aspiration, or the results may acquire an evil colouring, but to follow out that idea at full length would lead to a digression that would needlessly complicate the main argument. And, at all events, at present the attitude of mind most common in the educated world is one which exempts people from the danger of entering on unholy paths of occult development, inasmuch as the existence of any such paths, unholy or otherwise, has been nearly forgotten. The lesson the world needs chiefly is that which has to do with the possibility of accomplishing progress by definite desire, and the acquisition, as an intellectual process, of knowledge to the effect that spiritual growth is possible to an extent which may eventually quite eclipse the achievements of the intellect alone. Such knowledge is already floating about the world in abundance, in greater abundance within the last twenty years than at any previous period of this world's history. There has been no period, indeed, at which it has been altogether wanting. Some few have possessed it always; but in our day, for the first time, it has been publicly disseminated to an extent that no previous period has witnessed. Multitudes around us are still too dull-witted to appreciate it, too deeply enthralled by

conventional methods of thought to recognise the importance of what the more advanced observers perceive to be a new revelation. But the ranks of those who do are being continually reinforced ; and an ever-increasing minority are learning to realise the great truth these pages have been designed to emphasise, that mental culture of the kind that has hitherto commanded the reverence and inspired the enthusiasm of students engaged in any sort of intellectual activity is of value only so far as it is held to be a preparation for the higher studies, which may enable us to comprehend the designs of Nature as they affect ourselves,—that may put us in the way of rendering Nature that intelligent help without which no single individual of the human race can attain the summit levels of his potential destiny,—that may in a comprehensive phrase so illuminate our understanding as to show us at last the True Purpose of Knowledge.

# INSPIRATION IN POLITICS

MANY truths concerning Nature and the manner in which unseen influences affect the physical world have been obscured from modern observation by the intellectual habits of the nineteenth century. In a vague and general way it has been held decorous, even by people who cling to the external forms of religion with no higher motive than a desire to conform to respectability, to assume that Providence presides over human affairs, and even from time to time may contribute in some invisible way to their guidance. While the idea rested on no more scientific view of the subject, providential interference, however courteously regarded on general principles, was treated as a joke when definite examples might be in question. Tyndall wittily represented the attitude of mind into which current thought in his time was drifting when he endeavoured to frame a definition of such interventions in human affairs as have sometimes been called "Special Providences." These he found to represent something between an abnormal occurrence and a miracle, in fact, a special Providence was only a special Providence as long as we do not absolutely *know* that it was a special Providence. If this became certain, it ceased to be special Providence, and became a miracle. So between the banter of the scientific world and the ignorance of theologians, the part played in human affairs by superior unseen influences came to be regarded, within

the recollection of most of us now of mature age, as a species of primitive foolishness from which advancing civilisation would certainly disentangle itself more and more completely.

A very important change of opinion in reference to all problems of this character has been coming over the world since the general recognition in one way or another amongst many people of intelligence, that definite knowledge concerning higher planes of Nature than that on which physical life is carried on is accessible to human research. Ignorant as large masses of the otherwise cultivated world may still be in reference to the great and important truth, the fact that positive knowledge is obtainable with reference to activities going on in superphysical realms of existence is just as certain for more advanced multitudes as the fact that there are fountains in Trafalgar Square, and without complicating these introductory paragraphs of the present essay with superfluous illustration, it is enough to say that gradually we are becoming enabled to put a scientific complexion upon the whole subject of providential intervention, which in itself embodies a great region of spiritual discovery of the very highest interest. The truth of the matter as known to occult students is that the age of miracles, if special Providences are to be regarded as miracles, is no more a bygone age than the age of sunshine. The earth is still bathed in the glow which warmed the vegetation of the Carboniferous period, and intervention in human affairs, guided by the superior intelligence of beings on a spiritual plane, is just as active in the twentieth century as it can ever have been in the second, or at any earlier date when the fancy of the churches may have found freer play than at present.

Belief in the intervention of higher influences has only been discredited, indeed, by the clumsy habit of mind which

has disguised from our imagination the vast hierarchy of spiritual powers intervening between incarnate humanity and the supreme Unknowable Power which embraces the consciousness of the universe. To a limited extent alone will even the most advanced students of occultism be enabled to apprehend this hierarchy, but the fact that from levels of consciousness only a little exalted in comparison with the whole series, influences are exerted for the guidance of human activities, is a conclusion that the occult student is enabled to reach with entire confidence. And this conclusion is the keynote of the speculation with which this essay will be concerned. Ignoring for the present the manner in which the course of individual lives even may be affected by unseen agencies on high, it will be enough to confine our attention to those cases in which control is brought to bear on great national interests, and to the manner in which this is done through the instrumentality of incarnate human beings in a position, or capable of being guided into a position, of influence amongst their contemporaries. Inspiration is more or less carelessly conceded to great philosophers and poets, but it is much less readily recognised, where it is nevertheless frequently operative, in the great political crises of the world's history. Perhaps, indeed, even in crises which the familiarity of contemporary observers with their details would seem to keep within the limits of the commonplace, inspiration may be more active than, at the first glance, even spiritually-minded observers would be inclined to suppose; but, at all events, there are some crises in the past where we can distinctly recognise the working of intelligence from a higher plane, and others in which, if we are observant of the circumstances, we can recognise that agency even when less glaringly manifest.

The one historical episode which stands out con-

spicuously amongst all others as most conclusively demonstrating the fact that higher spiritual influences *may* be brought to bear upon political events at national crises, is to be found in the history of Joan of Arc. Stupid historians of the last century led us in our childhood to imagine that Joan of Arc was a wild enthusiast, the victim herself of hallucinations of a kind which inflamed the superstitious credulity of the period, and that when she got upon a war-horse and waved a flag she somehow infected the troops under her leadership with a corresponding enthusiasm, and contributed in this way to bring about their victory. By degrees a much more occult conception of Joan's real character and mission has been evolved from the study of the fairly abundant records concerning her preserved in the official archives of France. These have lately been translated and published in a volume familiar to all persons interested in the subject,[1] and the story embodied in the official documents now for the first time translated into English has been so frequently discussed of late that it seems hardly worth while to go over it in detail. Enough to remind the reader that the depositions now published include those which were taken in the first instance during Joan's original trial before the infamous Bishop of Beauvais and the other ecclesiastical brutes who planned her martyrdom, and also the later series which constitute the record of the subsequent trial twenty-four years after her death, the issue of which was a solemn declaration that the original condemnation and sentence had been wicked and unjust. We need not here go over the details of the first trial, of Joan's long imprisonment, cruel usage, and ultimate martyrdom; the point to be made has to do with the relatively unimpassioned depositions taken during the later investigation.

[1] *Jeanne D'Arc*, edited by T. Douglas Murray.

These show, beyond all possibility of doubt, that during her earlier girl life at Domremy, Joan was a simple little peasant saint endowed with psychic faculties which enabled her to be easily approached by beings belonging to another plane of Nature. We see her reluctantly, if submissively, accepting the task imposed upon her; protected with curious success through many dangers in the beginning; enabled by the manifestation of abnormal faculties to impress the Dauphin with the reality of her divine influences; and then at last we obtain a series of documents embodying the report of great French generals of high rank who fought under her command, and thus we are enabled to realise Joan as much more than an enthusiast, as a general officer of extraordinary genius, skilful as well in the organisation of her plans as in the final delivery of battle. "In all she did," says the Duc D'Alencon, for instance, one of the French generals serving under her command, "except in affairs of war, she was a very simple young girl, but for warlike things—bearing the lance, assembling an army, ordering military operations, directing artillery—she was most skilful. Everyone wondered that she could act with such wisdom and foresight as a captain who had fought for twenty or thirty years; it was, above all, in making use of artillery that she was so wonderful." Dozens of similar quotations might be made from the book under notice, and as many more would show that Joan was gifted with prophetic insight in connection with impending events of her campaigns, besides being inspired in the way described in reference to their direction and control. But for the moment it is not on Joan's career, as a story for its own sake, that the attention of the reader need be concentrated. The value of the story from the point of view of studies in what may be called political inspiration arises from the fact that it is such a glaring illustration of this that no one of

common intelligence can follow its details without coming to recognise that such inspiration is at all events possible. Joan, the milkmaid of Domremy, could no more have accomplished the achievements, which have made her name famous in history, out of her own head, than with her own single little right arm she could have swept the English armies from the walls of Orleans. But that she was the channel of an influence from some great power and intelligence in the background is no less certain than the fact that when a fountain is throwing its glittering stream into the air there is a reservoir of water somewhere in the background conducing to that result, besides the nozzle of the little pipe protruding above the ground. And thus arriving at the knowledge that superior spiritual influences are in emergencies brought to bear upon great crises in national life, let us set out to investigate one of these great crises in the national life of our own country with the view of forming an opinion as to whether in that case also, though with less obvious manifestation of its nature, the influence of a high spiritual intelligence may not be traced in the progress of political events.

In the French emergency of the fifteenth century, some critics may be inclined to suggest that whatever divine inspirers guided Joan of Arc to set Charles VII. on the French throne, they made a deplorable choice of a protégé. But Charles VII., after all, was only a passing circumstance. The question at stake may have been whether the nationality of France should be set on a pathway leading to ultimate realisation or broken up past redemption into a confused mass of provinces governed to a large extent by alien sovereigns. And when we come to the great crisis through which our own country passed in the century that immediately followed, we may recognise that here again the very existence of a nation, so far as the retrospect enables us

to judge, was actually at stake. In the reign of Queen Elizabeth it was uncertain whether England would survive as an independent unit in the European family. The great majority of those diplomatists who were looking on at the situation when Elizabeth came to the throne were distinctly of opinion that the disappearance of England as an independently governed sovereignty was merely a question of time, and that the young queen would assuredly be either the submissive wife of a Roman Catholic prince or a prisoner in her own Tower within a year or two. And whether we regard the history of England during the second half of the sixteenth century for its own sake simply as a thrilling narrative of national adventure or as a study bearing on the problems of political inspiration, there can hardly be any other period of fifty years selected which is more profoundly entitled to our earnest attention. As a link between two phases of civilisation, the reign of Queen Elizabeth is only comparable in importance to the reign of Queen Victoria, but the course of national evolution in the period that has just passed was so unlike that over which the great sovereign of the sixteenth century presided that the two episodes have scarcely any features in common. They are only alike in the significant circumstances that in both cases the crown was worn by a woman. In both cases also the women who wore the crown exhibited a dazzling personal superiority to the masculine monarchs who preceded them, but their superiority was associated with characters so unlike each other that the contrast is bewildering in presence of the fact that both were justly the objects of a feeling resembling worship on the part of their subjects. For us of the later period to get our minds in tune with the loyalty of the Elizabethan era, we have to hold many of the instincts of the later civilisation in abeyance. Sublime Elizabeth swore freely in her ordinary conversation, and used terrible oaths in her fits of

anger, which were frequent. She did not hesitate to inflict death and torture on those who offended her. She took no interest in religion except so far as its outward forms were associated with questions of national policy, and, as the latest revelations concerning her establish more clearly than before the vague scandals attaching to her personal history, she was quite free from the scruples which the refined habits of later civilisation have exalted to the highest rank among the virtues. And yet she was not alone *obeyed* by all statesmen, generals, and high dignitaries of the Church, and the law around her, with absolute unqualified and unhesitating obedience, as also by the semi-piratical sea captains who were building up her naval strength, and by the great nobles who were almost kings themselves in their own counties. She was widely and generally beloved by all classes of her people, except where Roman Catholic fanaticism prompted the agents of the papacy to plot for her assassination. And without appreciating step by step and in detail the genius she displayed as absolute mistress of this realm, all her subjects, high and low, with the exception just pointed out, were possessed with a sleepless terror of the risks they ran when her supremely precious life was in this way menaced. The modern lover of parliaments and responsible government looks back upon her rule as a tyranny. The people who (did not "groan" but) rejoiced under it looked upon it as the safeguard of the nation, so that the bare fear of losing it made them cruel with the cruelty that only fear can engender. They thirsted for the blood of Mary Stuart because she was the focus of Roman Catholic conspiracies aimed against their adored despot, the Queen. But their loyalty was not due to intelligent perception of her sagacity in government. The statesmen in her service did not do justice to that, or only towards the close of her reign. They often advised one course and were constrained by her

to follow another. They would be in despair, but her will defined the course they had to take, and the final result of her policy was national health and prosperity. Some of them who differed from her at the time looked back at the close of life, and declared that in such cases events had justified her view.

Here we find a parallel phenomenon in the later reign. Modern statesmen have had the candour to avow that when they have differed from the Queen—and according to modern fashion have had their way against her wishes—they have generally lived to see that they might more wisely have taken her "advice." The conditions are all reversed now, but in Elizabeth's day the Ministers gave the advice and the Queen disregarded it, to the ultimate satisfaction of all parties concerned.

Historians are often complimentary to Elizabeth's statesmanship, but not so often accurately appreciative. Among the earlier writers of the modern period—(we hardly look for discriminating criticism from the very early writers like Camden)—we find Green complimentary in a broad, vague way, but his history of Elizabeth's reign is merely a chapter in a comprehensive work written quite without the advantages that the publication of Spanish and other historical documents has conferred upon special students of the period. Sharon Turner is earnestly applausive, but not minutely appreciative. Lingard represents Catholic sentiment and is fiercely abusive of the great Queen, though even he is more concerned to prove her wicked than to impugn her abilities. Froude is, of course, the only historian who has dealt with the Elizabethan period so exhaustively that his book gives the reader material from which he can frame his own judgment, but as a critic he is unfair to the Queen by reason of a perpetual inclination to set down the triumphs of her reign to the "Protestant statesmanship" by which she was

surrounded. He shows very clearly, as the incidents of the reign are gradually unwound, that the "statesmanship" around her was so much plastic material which she moulded according to her own pleasure. When she tears it to pieces and does exactly the reverse of what her Protestant statesmen recommend, Froude always denounces her headstrong folly, but in so doing he cuts the ground from under the feet of his main argument. This is to the effect that the Queen has received an undue mead of admiration from posterity for the broad reason that she found her country in a deplorable state of weakness and national degradation, was surrounded with enemies apparently much more powerful than herself, and yet left the country—at the close of her long reign—at the summit of a glorious prosperity, secure from attack and potent as an influence in the world. People have credited the *Queen* with bringing these changes about, says Froude, when really it was the Protestant statesmanship by which she was surrounded that accomplished the miracle, in spite of her often indiscreet interference.

The argument is incompatible with the evidence he himself supplies to show that all along the line her will was the only force which prevailed in the affairs of State, that the Protestant statesmanship was continually overruled, and that events owed as much to her initiative as to her control. Not only is the popular estimate that has credited her with the results of her reign fully justified by the facts; it is only by a very close examination of the facts that the sound popular estimate can be expanded into a reverently appreciative estimate of the gratitude all succeeding generations of Englishmen owe to the memory of Queen Elizabeth, in that she saved this country from the ghastly fate to which it would have been subject under the rule of Catholic Spain, and rendered possible its growth and development into the culminating magnificence it attained during the reign of her

beloved successor three hundred years later. Dismal records of ignoble sovereignty fill up the interval, and the country scrambled rather than progressed with any march of uniform dignity along the Stuart and Georgian centuries, but it was secure from foreign and papal aggression, by virtue of Elizabeth's achievements, and there came a time when its civilisation blossomed into the finest flower of that growth yet seen on the earth, coincidently with the recrudescence of a sovereignty such as all men could bow down before in true loyalty and love.

But now to go back to the beginning of the Elizabethan period. Let us take the first striking illustration which suggests the idea of an intelligence superior to her own, guiding and supporting that of the young Queen. Elizabeth, be it remembered, came to the throne at the age of twenty-five, having up to that period been concerned partly in the love affairs of her early girlhood, partly, if we accept some recent lights thrown upon the history of the time, with the difficult task of disguising their consequences, and partly with the ever-present difficulty of keeping her head on her shoulders in presence of the multitudinous Roman Catholic intrigues designed to strike it off. The condition of things she found prevailing in the realm then passing suddenly into her own control was one in which a thousand dangers encompassed it on every side. But over and above all these, it was troubled by an internal complaint, the very nature of which was ill-apprehended by the political science of the period, or, rather, in consequence of the absolute ignorance which then prevailed concerning the first principles of what we now call economics, was as yet not even recognised as an internal disease. The currency of the country had been debased by successive sovereigns until there was not an honest coin in circulation from one end of the realm to the other. Commerce of all kinds, trade

and industry were demoralised by the utterly untrustworthy character of the medium in which values were estimated. Any modern economist looking back at such a condition of things would, of course, perceive at a glance that the only way of restoring national prosperity was to call in the debased coinage and put the currency on a sound foundation. And it is within the familiar knowledge of all students of the period that within two years of Elizabeth's accession this course was actually pursued. With a great deal of ingenuity in the management of the details, the currency was restored to a healthy state, and in this way future foundations of prosperity were laid. But what is very imperfectly appreciated as regards its true significance, by Froude himself, is nevertheless brought out plainly in his most valuable history. The very first document that ever came into existence relating to the necessity of reforming the currency is one written by Queen Elizabeth herself, in her own handwriting, within a year of her accession. The plan embodied in this paper was not exactly the plan ultimately adopted to carry out the purpose she had in view when she forced her attendant Ministers to face the problem. But the reform of the currency was carried out by the Queen's direction, and was the product of her initiative. Here we have a much less romantic incident to deal with than those which attended the relief of Orleans under the direction of Joan of Arc. But as an intellectual wonder there is not much to choose between the skill of the "Maid" in making use of her artillery and that of the royal English girl setting out on her great mission for the regeneration of England by addressing herself first to the economic problem, the urgency of which she alone perceived.

And within a very brief period another problem had to be dealt with by the girl whose single will at that time swept aside all the "Protestant statesmanship" around her

when her own internal impulse was decisive. Of course, she hesitated continually, and drove those who were the sport of her uncertain moments to the verge of distraction. But the question whether or not she was becoming the channel of a higher intelligence than that which even she, bright-witted as she certainly was, exercised in her normal state has to be settled by reference to what she finally did, not by reference to the wavering impulses which preceded action. And in 1560 no question was more pressing for the government of England than the question whether serious efforts should be made to turn the French out of Scotland. With Mary Stuart, the bride of France, and Mary of Lorraine, the Regent, at Edinburgh, the idea of hunting the French garrison bag and baggage out of the Firth of Forth was one that presented itself to the minds of English statesmen as no less urgently desirable than hopelessly beyond the range of attainment. Whether steps were to be taken towards that end, or whether things were to be left to slide, that was the question before the Council, and the question on which Elizabeth, as long as she hesitated, claimed the advice of her most thoughtful councillors. A long paper by Sir Nicholas Bacon is in existence which argues the hopelessness of the project. The country was destitute of all the resources which could render such an undertaking possible. The Queen had neither men nor money at her command that would justify her in attempting to intervene in Scotland. To make such an effort would be to invite the open hostility of France, and the country would be crushed between the upper and the nether millstones. Every member of the Council, with one exception, concurred in this view, and all their opinions having been taken and carefully considered, the Queen disregarded them one and all, and sent a fleet to the Forth to begin the work of turning the French out of Scotland.

Well can we see now how supremely necessary it was that this should be done, as necessary, perhaps, for the future welfare of England as it was necessary for the future welfare of the other country, that the English in the time of Joan should have been turned out of France. As for the manner in which the Queen set to work, people who can only realise the idea of inspiration from a higher level of spiritual dignity than that represented by incarnate humanity will cry out at the idea of assuming that anything so deeply contaminated as Queen Elizabeth's policy continually was with falsehood and trickery of all kinds could be regarded as divinely inspired, but in order properly to appreciate the great problem with which we are dealing, we must get rid of the notion that inspiration is only possible in the case of those who represent the saintly character. Most certainly inspiration may be associated with a saintly nature like that of the unblemished milkmaid of Domremy, and where this is the case no doubt the inspiration may be infinitely more complete than in other cases, infinitely more productive, moreover, of ultimate spiritual consequences associated with the progress of the personage inspired. But political inspirations have for their purpose great national desiderata, and even where the personality, which to bring off results it is necessary to inspire, may be very little entitled to spiritual admiration on its own account; nevertheless, if it is susceptible of mental guidance, it may be, for the great purposes in view, rendered the channel of such guidance accordingly. And that is all the present argument claims in reference to Elizabeth. By no means that she was saintly in her nature. But she was the person through whom, if she became accessible to influence at all, it was most easily possible to control events. Indeed, she was the only person in this realm by whom it is conceivable that events could have been controlled, because whether she was under inspiration or not, her will was

undeniably supreme. To have inspired one of her ministers, for example, leaving her to the vagaries of her own natural fancy, would have been a fruitless undertaking, nor is it necessary to assume that in all the acts of her long reign she was guided by higher intelligence. The consequences of that reign, considered with reference to the conditions by which she was embarrassed, do indeed seem to suggest that on the whole she must either have been inspired or capable, by her own intuitions, of knowing the right thing to do at any given moment. But certainly in special cases, as, for example, in her deplorable obstinacy in trying to keep possession of Havre, we seem to observe her inspirations at fault. But that little episode lay completely outside the main current of her policy. Its study would only be useful in so far as it contributes to show the docility with which she was obeyed by her servants, whether she was right or wrong, but, at all events, it has nothing to do with the three great illustrations which may be taken from the history of her reign in vindication of the general view which this essay is designed to suggest.

The fleet which was sent to the North under Winter was not ostensibly commissioned by the Queen. Reserving to herself, in accordance with her usual somewhat tortuous policy, a loophole of escape from future difficulties should they arise, the Queen directed Winter to declare himself to be acting altogether on his own responsibility as a maritime adventurer if he met with defeat. A wonderful illustration of the personal devotion the Queen commanded is embodied in the fact that the gallant admiral in question accepted the task imposed upon him on these terms. He was by no means the only one of her servants from whom she exacted similar self-sacrifice or by whom it was willingly rendered.

And here we have to recognise a condition of things

which would be even more reluctantly accepted by modern criticism than the theory of political inspiration. The French, be it remembered, were aware of the fact that questions were under discussion in the English Council as to whether they should be attacked in Scotland, and a French fleet was under orders to proceed northwards to reinforce the Regent. Froude writes: "A few days before Winter sailed, d'Elbœuf had started from Dieppe. Had the weather been fair he would have been in Leith before the English fleet had cleared the Thames, and would have thrown a force into Scotland which would have changed the course of history." But, as usual, the gale which was required to support the plans of Queen Elizabeth came opportunely to her aid. Fierce northerly winds blew "wilder and more wild." Winter quietly took refuge in Lowestoft until the storm had blown over. D'Elbœuf was caught at sea by the tempest; half his fleet was wrecked on the Holland flats, some vessels foundered at sea, d'Elbœuf himself was unable to get back to Dieppe, "but only two ships survived from the fleet." In spite of languid belief in the control of Providence over the elements as well as over human events, which has survived the progress of Agnosticism, few of us, except those who in some measure understand the *rationale* of such control, are prepared to recognise it in specific cases. But the frequency with which the required gale would turn up to serve the great effort then in progress to maintain the English nationality is highly suggestive for observers who can regard the whole problem from a lofty standpoint. The tale of Winter's activities in the Forth, where he successfully destroyed the forts of Burntisland, and the two or three French vessels lying alongside, is full of interest as a thrilling historical episode. D'Oysel, the French general, found his communications cut off, his troops without food in the one county in Scotland

where he was without a friend, and with no retreat open to him save by the tedious circuit over Stirling Bridge. Humour is added to the interest of the narrative when we refer to the answer Winter sent to the Queen Regent when she indignantly enquired "by whose order he was levying war in the dominions of the Queen of Scots." He represented himself as quite an innocent person engaged in conveying munitions of war to Berwick and seeking a safe anchorage in the Forth, "Knowing no other but peace between my said Sovereign and all other Princes." Then to his amazement he was shot at by the force at Burntisland, and so "I determined with myself to give all the aid I might to the congregation and to let the French from their wicked practices as far as I might, and that hereof the Queen's Highness, my Royal Mistress, was nothing privy."

So much for the instructive little episode of 1560. Let us pass on now, for a volume instead of an article would be required if we attempted to trace every case in which there seems reason to regard the Queen's natural intelligence as fortified by loftier wisdom. Let us leap forward at once eight-and-twenty years to the supreme crisis of her reign, when the mighty forces of Spain, after protracted preparation, were gathered together to accomplish her final annihilation. In dealing even with the story of the Spanish Armada, it is hardly possible within a reasonable compass to follow out every important and suggestive event. But first let us recognise in the mirror of Froude's history the direction in which we must seek for the real authority exerted at the time. Froude himself is quite unconscious of the true significance of the facts he brings to light. He continually reviles the Queen for her earlier neglect of precautions which were, in the opinion of the Council, supremely necessary. But this neglect he says himself was no fault of the Council. "The Council would not have left Drake to

ask for what was obviously necessary. The Queen had taken upon herself the detailed management of everything. Lord Howard's letters prove that she and she alone was responsible. As if every officer she possessed were in a conspiracy to ruin her, she appears to have kept all descriptions of supplies within her own reach in London or at Chatham, permitting nothing to be served out without an order from herself." In other parts of the story we read bitter criticisms of her hard thrift in paring down expenses and postponing preparations which those around her conceived to be of urgent importance. "One precaution only had she taken. She had placed at the head of her naval administration the fittest person in her dominions to manage it, Sir John Hawkins. . . . When the moment of trial came, Hawkins sent her ships to sea in such condition—hulls, rigging, spars, and running ropes—that they had no match in the world for either speed, safety, or endurance." But at various periods before this time of final trial came she would drive some of her Ministers to distraction by disestablishing a part of the fleet, or by sending vessels to cruise in the channel short-handed with strict orders not to go further. Hawkins was indignant at our uncertain dallying. There were moments when Froude thinks it would have been quite easy for the Spaniards, had they seized the chance, to have accomplished the ruin of England. "I am sorry," wrote Walsingham to Burleigh, "to see so great a danger hanging over this realm so lightly regarded and so carelessly provided for"; and again we have to note that the Queen's usual demand for total self-sacrifice on the part of her servants allowed her to leave Drake and Howard the task of finding absolutely necessary supplies for some of her fleet at Plymouth, and she was even mean enough in the long run to cavil at the extravagance they had been guilty of in connection with this gallant effort. But for the moment her private character

is not the question under discussion. She, as we have seen, was responsible for everything. And everything was ready when the time of trial actually came. The English ships, we read, were ready "in royal and perfect estate, feeling the seas no more than if they had been riding at Chatham."

We all know what happened when they came in contact with the enemy, and we all know how their splendid fighting qualities were reinforced by the usual gales which in a greater degree than the broadsides of Hawkins dispersed and finally destroyed the mighty Armada. From the point of view of all ordinary criticism the Queen's neglect in the beginning to set to work on her preparations when the danger seemed imminent condemns her administrative wisdom past redemption, but on the assumption of an influence behind her, which could see into the course of events a little more clearly than contemporary criticism, may we not feel that on the whole it was well that the real effort of preparation was delayed until the eve of the great day, so that no force employed was wasted in advance? From the point of view of even a little loftier observation, the events which were destined to delay the departure of the Armada would have been clearly within the range of foresight. The Queen's Ministers may have been in momentary expectation of news from the Lizard that the great fleet was in sight, but the Queen's inspirers, if we favour the suggestion which hints at such activity, knew quite well that the crisis was not so urgent. Anyhow, the whole Armada story, although full of intricate details and full of little incidents which by no means reflected credit on the Queen as a human being, embodies the three leading features which are all-important from the point of view of the argument in hand. The Queen was absolutely responsible for all that was done at the time. For a couple of years or so she was regarded by ordinary observers as culpably

apathetic. When the emergency actually arose she was ready, and the result was the salvation of this country from the direst peril it had incurred since the reign of King Alfred, and its establishment on such a basis of European prestige, that though for many years to come the Roman Catholic party, with the sanction of the Pope, engaged in countless plots for Queen Elizabeth's assassination, no further attempt was made by force of arms to overthrow the nationality she had rescued from destruction.

With this brief glance at a period of our history no less suggestive than enthralling in its interest, we may leave the reader for the moment to apply the principle involved to other and later emergencies in accordance with the bent of his own sympathies. For many of us who not alone believe in, but realise, the activity of the influences adjusting, modifying, and guiding human affairs from higher planes of consciousness, the age of miracles in that sense has by no means faded into the past, but is present around us even in these latter days. It would be very embarrassing, however, to attempt the interpretation of modern political episodes where strong feelings are enlisted on opposite sides, and the idea of anything resembling providential intervention would be deeply resented by one side or the other. But the general law guiding all such intervention is clear, simple, and intelligible. The individual units of the human family must be allowed to exercise as they choose the free will which is an essential factor in their future spiritual progress, but sometimes it may happen that the consequences of that exercise give rise to complications which threaten to embarrass the general design of which they form a part. No intervention, whether by the method of mental suggestion or by other more sensational devices, will ever be allowed to impair the legitimate working of moral causes which each of us may set up in our own individual cases. But when

some unfortunate convergence of human mistake threatens to bring about unfortunate results which neither the community concerned, nor even the individuals themselves have deserved, beneficent intervention is a possibility, and, as some students of the higher law believe, of frequent occurrence. In the two great cases which this essay has been concerned with, nothing less was at stake than the salvation of a nation. Perhaps in some later cases the protection of a nation from disastrous consequences of a really unnecessary war has been a purpose of sufficient magnitude to justify the introduction of an unseen spiritual factor into the political *mêlée*. But for the study of the law involved, a law like many others commonly regarded as those of Nature which is really the expression of a conscious will on a lofty plane of activity, the law in question is best studied with reference to historical events lying too far back in the past to provoke the acrimony of party feeling.

# THE MANAGEMENT OF MANKIND

MR H. G. WELLS has shown himself gifted with a fertile and variegated imagination, and, in some of his works, with a keen comprehension of the hidden springs controlling human action. One of his recent stories, *The Sea Lady*, although purely farcical as regards its general structure, contained some episodes of great poetical beauty towards the close, and suggested currents of thought too subtle to be plainly expressed in language. But in the professedly serious volume he has lately given to the world, entitled, *Man in the Making*, Mr Wells seems to have been under the impression that he was evolving deep philosophical conceptions, when in reality the whole series of essays does little more than throw into shape some of his most superficial antipathies. The leading idea of the volume is that we are engaged at the present moment in making the mankind of the future, in bringing up the next generation; and that practially all other considerations should be merged in the supremely important effort to bring up that generation in the healthiest, most pure-minded and lofty condition conceivable. But the existing generation has to live its life even, while engaged in the task of rearing its progeny, and Mr Wells's practical conception concerning the manner in which that life should be led, as, indeed, concerning the way in which the children of the masses should be provided for,

will probably recommend themselves to very few among those who are likely to be his readers.

Whether to let the neglected baby of the lower classes take his chance, or to reorganise the vast population of these islands on Spartan principles, so that all young children should be brought up in public institutions, this problem is one of very old standing. Mr Wells aims—in all his proposals for the consideration either of Government or Providence—at being original, so he takes a middle course between two extreme ideas just suggested. Where children are not properly cared for by their natural parents, he would put them out to board under the authority of the State, and charge the expenses against the parents. But the difficulty of getting blood out of a stone, though fairly well recognised in practical life, might in view of the rapid progress of science be conceived as even more possible than extraction of board-money for their children from drunken parents in the East End. A great deal might be urged in favour of vast public institutions for the rearing of gutter children, who at present cost the community almost as much for their schooling and ultimate imprisonment as they would cost for their entire maintenance under the more comprehensive system, but one need hardly go into detail in discussing the unpractical character of Mr Wells's middle course.

The most remarkable feature of his treatise has to do with its view of political institutions. There was a time, some fifty years ago, when a fairly considerable body of people in England were drifting, under the influence of what was then, and then seemed to be the permanent, ascendency of Liberal ideas into an attitude of languid academic republicanism. The philosophical Radicals of the Manchester school were not eager to blow up Buckingham Palace or burn the châteaux of the aristocracy, but they tried to teach the world that it would be a good thing when Buckingham

Palace should be tenantless, the House of Lords turned into a museum of antiquities, and the divine principle of popular election applied to every detail of Government organisation. Now, however, like the political economy of fifty years ago, philosophic radicalism has fallen into hopeless disrepute. One may shrink from echoing the Stuart doctrine of divine right, one may have grave doubts concerning the official perfection of primogeniture, and one may even follow some agriculture theorists who distinctly disapprove of large estates. But, on the other hand, the fuller experience which the last fifty years have given us of the results springing from popular election has so weakened the foundations of the earlier radicalism, that certainly the tendency of modern thought is to seek political salvation by means of monarchical and aristocratic institutions—rather than by the exaggeration of democratic methods—provided these can be brought into improved working order.

Welding his radicalism with his zeal for the improvement of babies, Mr Wells is shocked to think that people cannot be tolerant in an easy-going way of royalty and privilege without setting a desperately bad example. "You cannot kneel to the King without presenting a kneeling example to the people, without becoming as good a teacher of servility as though you were servile to the marrow." There are almost as many false and unwholesome ideas embodied in that protest as there are words in the sentence. Undeniably, kingship, royalty in any form, has to be evolved into a higher degree of perfection than has yet been provided for by the accepted methods of its evolution, before it is entirely worthy of the fervent loyalty expressed in the act of kneeling; but to associate the idea of servility with loyalty is to make as morally degraded a mistake as would be involved in a sneer at the self-sacrifice of love in private life. One may

distinctly, in private life, forego one's own advantage sometimes for the sake of another human being, no more actually exalted, perhaps, in the scale of creation than ourselves, but the capacity for doing this is the measure of the extent to which a human being has evolved himself towards a higher divine condition. So in politics, loyalty to the sovereign may be exactly the corresponding feeling to that which inspires the noblest conduct in private life and conduces to individual progress. On the nature of loyalty to the Crown one might dilate to infinitude. The value of such loyalty as a purifying influence circulating through the veins of a nation can hardly be over-rated. The practical value of royal supremacy, if, in imagination, we invest the monarch with the mental and moral attributes appropriate to his station, might be almost infinite.

The democratic system involves the maximum infusion of administrative corruption, as the present condition of New York may serve to elucidate. A theoretically perfect king would have no motive for making any appointment except that which had to do with the public interest. It may be argued that to speculate concerning the influence on affairs of the theoretically perfect king is absurd when the chances of birth may convey the crown to stupid or worthless successors even of a Marcus Aurelius, but it is clearly unfair to consider the problem with reference exclusively to the stupid and worthless, as writers of Mr Wells's type persist in doing. The truth is that, like so many other phenomena of the modern world, royalty has been undergoing a remarkable improvement in the course of the last half century. It is interesting to investigate the share in effecting that improvement which was taken by the beloved Sovereign who last passed away from these realms. When Queen Victoria came to the throne, there was hardly a court in Europe presided over by a man whom any lofty-minded

observer could respect. When Queen Victoria quitted the throne she so long adorned, there was hardly a sovereign in Europe—not more than one or two at the most—who failed to command respect both on mental and moral grounds. Whether the change was brought about by her influence and example, or was somehow a phenomenon concurrent with her appearance on the scene, is a question one need not here discuss; but at all events, the change has been brought about, and in view of that change, together with the glance we may simultaneously take over the disappointments of the democratic philosopher, one can only say that no time could be less wisely chosen for the revival by Mr Wells of an all but forgotten and discarded theory of public life, than this in which he has launched his essays against the current of a steadily moving stream, flowing in exactly the opposite direction from that in which he wishes us to travel.

These criticisms, however, deal with the proposals before us merely from the point of view of Mr Wells himself, who treats mankind as simply a succession of generations each distinct from its predecessor. Almost all sociological problems assume a new colouring when once we recognise the continuity of mankind by the light of the all-important principle of reincarnation. Many people who are favourably impressed by that doctrine as an idea by itself, fail to see how it gears in with the practical business of life in many different ways. For the moment let us take an illustration from problems remote from those which Mr Wells is handling. Good people are often eager to carry out schemes for the improvement of some of the lower races. The gradual development of civilisation among the negro races of Africa, for instance, presents itself to some imaginations as a task peculiarly worthy of philanthropic effort. The dream of the future in this connection supplies a picture of an Africa inhabited by black races living lives of

European decorum and cultivating the arts and sciences. Those who understand the scheme of evolution to which we all belong a little better, know that the improvement of any one individual negro means his birth next time in a superior race, where he will find free scope for further improvement. The grand climax of negro evolution will be reached when there are no more negroes left on earth at all, when all shall have passed on into higher races. This does not mean that we should meanwhile neglect the welfare of the negro, but a comprehension of the manner in which progress would really be accomplished would give a more intelligent direction to energies spent on the task referred to.

Now, with appropriate modifications, the same idea has to be applied to problems of civilised sociology. We need not treat with contempt the duty of educating the next generation, but our foremost duty—if people would only understand the matter aright—is to live in the present on such principles that when the existing generation comes back again in due time it will show evidence of not having lived the previous time in vain. The next generation may, undoubtedly, be helped in its upward growth by arrangements that we may make for its advantage, but it will in the main have to depend on itself for its growth, and we could not make a greater mistake than to suppose that from our present point of view we can see exactly what social and other conditions will be best calculated to promote that growth. In so far as by virtue of our own enlightenment we may have attained to the comprehension of some broad ethical principles, we may wisely take care that these shall not be forgotten by our immediate descendants. Schemes of education should, of course, pass on such results as we have ourselves reached in connection with mental and moral progress, and most existing schemes of education,

one may incidentally remark, are ludicrously ill-designed from that point of view; but the main principle to be guided by in imagination might be defined as follows:— Broadly speaking we represent a generation of mankind which was last in physical embodiment in a fairly remote past. We have gone through various experiences this time, and have acquired certain knowledge that we did not possess before. We modify the institutions around us accordingly, and we leave our work to be the starting-point of the next generation. It would be a profound delusion to suppose that we are "making" that generation, defining the conditions under which its people are going to live. They will frame those conditions for themselves, if they have any vigour of their own, and in turn, when we of this generation come back for another spell of embodied existence, we shall find a multitude of ideas current and available for us to work with which as yet are quite unforeseen. There is plenty of time before us all. That is one of the consolatory reflections which the view of Nature we are handling suggests, and which many impatient philanthropists are apt to forget, and that is probably why the Supreme Wisdom presiding over the whole undertaking is content to "make mankind" by degrees, and is so happily independent of the advice from time to time offered with the kindest intentions by writers like Mr Wells, who frame projects for the better management of the human race under the disadvantage of not comprehending the basic principle of the evolutionary method in actual operation.

# THE WOMEN OF THE FUTURE

FROM the point of view of thinkers who regard problems connected with the social position of women in the light of the newer knowledge now dawning on the world with reference to the principles guiding human evolution, it is impossible to estimate the probabilities of future change connected with the position of women in society and the State without bearing in mind two or three fundamental principles ruling the spiritual development both of women and men. The incomplete conceptions of the whole natural design with which most people have hitherto been content to work lead to habits of thought according to which the two sexes are regarded as different products of Nature, as clearly and permanently separated in constitution, the one from the other, as dogs and cats. In the light of the reincarnation idea, which brings order into the chaos which human affairs present to the mind without it, we are able to realise that the permanent spiritual ego of each human being is neither of one sex nor the other, but subject to influences which guide its manifestation in the male or the female form according to what may be roughly indicated, in the first instance, as the necessities of its growth and progress. The simple truth of the matter, from the point of view of "those who know," is that every human being, in the course of the countless ages provided as the field of human evolution, manifests with approximately equal frequency as man and

as woman. There is no man now living on this earth who has not, to put the matter crudely, been a woman during scores of former lives, and no woman exists who has not in the same way been through the experiences of incarnation as man. And another fundamental principle to be borne in mind, in order that the problems before us should be correctly appreciated, is this—that whatever intellectual progress is achieved by the ego in any given life, is permanently associated therewith for all subsequent time, nothing whatever in the nature of such progress being ever again lost. How is it, then, the superficial enquirer may ask, that we fail to recognise in the present condition of things an absolute equality between the two sexes? For however completely possessed any of us may be with the conviction that women in the future will rise to a very much higher degree of power and influence than they have hitherto possessed, we may all recognise that, as a matter of fact, at the present state of evolution, and under the present conditions of social environment, the average intellectual level of woman is somewhat below the average intellectual development of man.

The first answer is, of course, that educational methods contribute to maintain this slight inequality, but this is really a very incomplete answer. The result is much more due to the fact that owing to the long course of oppression to which, for four or five thousand years, women have been subject, the female organism itself has become adapted to the conditions in which it finds itself. It has become a somewhat less convenient instrument as compared with the other for the ego of very advanced intellectual development. No doubt in a vast number of cases this difficulty is borne down by the sheer force of the spiritual entity manifesting itself. And it is hardly necessary to emphasise the obvious truth that enormous numbers of women are enormously superior in intellectual power to enormous

numbers of men, but that does not alter the truth of the broad idea just recognised, that the average, taking all examples of both sexes into account, works out in the way described. If the explanation just given seems to conflict with the previous statement to the effect that no intellectual attainment once welded with the constitution of the ego can ever be lost, the answer simply is that people who represent advanced levels of progress in our current humanity may often in truth be greater than their physical plane manifestation appears to suggest. The idea can only be conveyed in language which is symbolical and to a certain extent misleading, but the physical plane vessel, so to speak, may not be qualified to hold all the spiritual consciousness of the ego, and each life may be a partial manifestation rather than a complete expression of the real individuality. By another metaphor we may think of the physical body as an instrument on which the soul-consciousness is playing, and may easily apprehend that the limited range of its notes may forbid the execution of all the musical ideas in the consciousness which makes use of it.

These few sentences fall short of explaining the laws determining the sex of human entities coming into manifestation on the physical plane, but may serve to put something like a new complexion upon the practical problems concerned with the political advancement of women. Taking for the moment a loftier standpoint than that occupied by the mere advocates of Female Suffrage, and looking forward through great stretches of time towards conditions which will no doubt ultimately prevail, we may feel sure not merely that women will come to exercise as much influence in public affairs as men, but will even in the long run, in all probability, attain to a peculiar kind of pre-eminence which the experience of modern life has not yet prepared thinkers of the ordinary type to forecast. By

degrees the sense of justice, already operative in so remarkable a way towards the emancipation of women from restraints which earlier conditions of social life imposed upon them, will still further enlarge their opportunities, and the intellectual disabilities of the female organism referred to above will gradually disappear. Many generations, of course, will be required to bring about the restoration of what may be called physical brain equality, but natural processes, though slow, are obedient in the long run to the influences at work. The time will come when the old-world superstition—that some natural inferiority inevitably clings to the mentality of women—will disappear. When that disappearance is complete, and egos coming into incarnation find no impediment to their complete manifestation in the female brain, then it is more than probable that mankind will gradually recognise that, in one respect,—in one detail of great importance,—the female organism evinces a superiority as compared with that of men. That superiority is one belonging to a faculty so little understood at present that its mere existence is hardly suspected by the majority of ordinary thinkers, but every human being of considerable advancement is more or less susceptible of receiving impressions from the spiritual plane, which approach the consciousness in a way that has nothing to do with the familiar five senses. These impressions may come either from other beings of a loftier order, or from what must be vaguely described for the moment as that superior part of the spiritual entity not fully expressed in the incarnation. The faculty of receiving such impressions is that which goes by the name of "intuition." But the word itself is continually misunderstood, frequently, indeed, taken as a synonym for a tendency to jump to conclusions without adequate reason. Nor, indeed, in the earlier and less vivid manifestations of intuition is it easy to discriminate between

the real gift and the tendency just referred to. But the real faculty is one of a very sublime order, ultimately destined to play an enormous part in the activities of the physical world. Now, it seems to be the fact that, with reference at all events to all such problems as we are now considering, the female organism is somewhat better qualified to exercise the faculty of intuition than that of the man. As in the other example quoted above in reference to intellectual development, we have, of course, to recognise that enormous numbers of men are more intuitive than enormous numbers of women. But the average law holds good as before. Taking all examples of both sexes into account, it will, as far as experience has hitherto pointed to the probabilities of the future, be found that the average intuitive faculty of women is more delicately sensitive than that of men. And when this comes to be understood, and when the true meaning of intuition itself comes to be understood, so that people will see how enormously important it is as a guide to human action, then that slight average superiority will tell in the relations of the sexes just in the same way, looking back to more savage conditions of life, as the average muscular superiority of men has told in the relations of the sexes during the barbarous ages of mankind.

Now anyone who appreciates the significance of all these thoughts will see how they bear upon problems connected with the current aspirations and progress of women. In truth there is a good deal in the actual condition of things around us to justify the antagonism that is exhibited to the movements of which the Female Suffrage agitation may be taken as an example. And, again, from the point of view of those who are ill-disposed to recognise the present democratic constitution of Western countries as exhibiting final counsels of perfection in regard to forms of government, the Franchise itself may be regarded with some

contempt as a prize hardly worth much fighting for. But, as a means to an end, it may have its value, just as the democratic franchise of men—as a means to an end in connection with the great scheme of spiritual evolution—may have its value and purpose. The exercise of the Female Franchise through many generations would, no doubt, tend to promote that levelling up of intellectual capacity above referred to, and in that way would be conducive to the far larger and more beautiful purposes of Nature held in reserve. As a practical measure of justice, of course, from the standpoint of conventional politics which accepts the Parliamentary system as the expression of supreme wisdom, the refusal of the Franchise to women is the product in probably equal proportion of sexual arrogance and natural stupidity on the part of men. But the simple reason why the great and important body of enthusiasts gallantly fighting the cause of Female Suffrage at present have so far been entirely unsuccessful in their work is not to be found in the vigour of the reasoning opposed to theirs, but simply in the indifference of the House of Commons to all proposals which do not directly—in one way or another—affect party interests. The champions of Woman Suffrage argue forcibly enough that in regard to any legislation affecting women generally outside this particular proposal it is useless to expect justice at the hands of a democratic Parliament until the members thereof are conscious of the fact that they have female votes to reckon with when they come back to their constituencies. As long as they have no such votes to consider, the suffrage agitation interests them very little. Ultimately, no doubt, the general conviction concerning the injustice of the existing system will grow more and more intense. Some day or other a ministry may be in power which will even find it pay to play up to this con-

viction. Then the change will be brought about, and in all probability, for some time to come, will be found to bring no particular result in its train.

Its purpose in evolution lies immeasurably beyond the horizons of most of those who are at present contending for it in the interests of immediate justice. But with reference to the practical aspects of the agitation, it would perhaps be wiser on the part of those engaged to show a more correct appreciation than they exhibit generally of the obstacles which really stand in their way. Individual men, both in and out of the House, will, of course, be always found ready to echo the brutal or stupid prejudices with which we are all familiar. But outside the unwholesome atmosphere of the House of Commons it would probably be difficult to find any considerable group of cultivated men that would fail to yield an enormous majority, if polled, in favour of putting all properly qualified women in a position to exercise the vote if they wish to do so. It is, perhaps, doubtful at present whether the same remark could be made with reference to any corresponding groups of women. Apathy on the subject is very widely diffused throughout the sex on whose behalf the battle is raging, and in multitudes of cases apathy would be too mild a word to use. But that state of feeling is the product of social tradition, and will disappear in company with many of the traditions guiding the manners and customs of women in the earlier Victorian age. One might easily follow up the view of the subject here put forward by extensive excursions into regions of thought in connection with the future position of women in the world which would perhaps point to the disappearance of traditions too firmly rooted at present to be conveniently discussed. Speculation, illuminated by correct appreciation of the laws governing the whole progress of mankind, may often reach forward to

startling conclusions. But these for the present, at all events, may be left aside. As a practical question of the moment, Female Suffrage depends upon the chances of future party conflict. One or other of the rival commanders may, sooner or later, find it personally profitable to play the card, while, as regards all the really great thoughts which collect around the idea, these can only be appreciated properly in the light of conceptions regarding human progress, compared to which the actual political controversies of the moment are as the dust on the road to be travelled.

# SOCIALISM IN THE LIGHT OF OCCULT SCIENCE

FOR those of us who contemplate the problems of life from the point of view of some knowledge concerning the principles which really govern human evolution, there is much at the same time amusing and pathetic in the various schemes aiming at the promotion of human happiness embraced in the vague term Socialism. We need not for a moment stop to consider the objections brought to bear against the views of those who call themselves socialists, by rivals inspired with enthusiasm for the policy described by the term "individualism." In both cases the people concerned are groping vaguely in the dark in search of ideals to which they can be guided by no trustworthy clue in their possession. But the student of occultism, in criticising the proposals of the socialist, may begin by giving away with both hands all the arguments that can be brought to bear against co-operative methods by those who believe in the supreme virtue of individual effort.

The reasons which really preclude the possibility of working out in practice any such designs for the promotion of human welfare as those for instance embodied years ago by Mr. Bellamy in his well-known book, *Looking Backward*, have to do with facts concerning spiritual conditions underlying human progress, the true character of which is wholly unsuspected by the commonplace political philan-

thropist. Of course, Mr Bellamy's book was only one of a great number following out somewhat similar lines of thought. One of much more recent origin, entitled *A Vision of the Future*, by Miss Jane Hume Clapperton, may claim our attention directly, and only within the last month that much-admired and amiable dreamer, Count Tolstoy, has set forth, in a long article translated and published in the *Times*, his earnest conviction to the effect that human welfare depends entirely upon the abolition of that "great iniquity," private property in land. The equitable division of the soil amongst those prepared to cultivate it is, in his estimation, the one supreme need of mankind. Superficial and frivolous objections to this course might be set up on the ground that private property in land would not be extinguished by taking the acres from one owner and handing them over to another. The suggestion has some flavour of resemblance to that underlying the familiar Irish conception of Utopia, where every man was to have a hundred a year and another man to wait upon him. In Russia perhaps—from the phenomena of which country Count Tolstoy deduces conceptions which he supposes to be capable of world-wide application—it is not impossible that peasant proprietorship and the application of "*la petite culture*" might work well for a time as compared with existing systems, though even there it is probable that the conflicting influence of vodka in some cases and virtuous thrift in others would soon bring about a distribution of the fields by no means in harmony with the good Count's programme.

For the moment, however, let us put aside all immediate practical considerations relating to the economical merits of big and little estates. At variance with views which have hitherto prevailed in England, important testimony has, indeed, been accumulated in considerable volume of late in

favour of cultivation by means of small allotments, and, as a question of practical politics, great interest attaches to the controversy with which that evidence is concerned, as well as with large schemes of land nationalisation which need not be associated in any degree with the doctrines of socialism. For people whose political opinions may be described by the colour of the electioneering posters they favour, rather than by any more detailed form of words, land nationalisation is generally regarded as a radical proposal to be supported, as such, by the democratic candidate and treated as diabolical in its wickedness by the true-blue Tory. It really lies quite outside the area of political sympathies favouring in the one case democracy, and in the other, government by the upper class. It would rob the country of many decorative remnants coming down to us from a feudal period; it would not necessarily conduce to the system of government by the least-educated masses of the people; it would be compatible with infinite reform in the direction of disfranchising the unworthy, and it is really a scheme of a highly practical character to be considered with reference solely to its economical consequences. But it is not a scheme dependent entirely on that ignorance of the true principles governing human evolution which is the foundation on which most of the theories embraced by the term socialism actually rest.

In taking this view one need not be supposed to be dealing merely with those extravagances of socialism with which Count Tolstoy, for one, is in sympathy, by virtue of which everyone is supposed to be supplied with everything according to his need, while everyone is equally supposed to be willing, in his enthusiasm for the common good, to exert himself with zeal along any lines of industry for which he may be qualified. Without diving into the depths of occultism in search of an explanation, practical observers

of life will recognise that all people are not equally endowed with altruistic enthusiasm, and that under the socialistic system those who developed the largest body of need would not always be those on whose behalf it would be most desirable that the others should exert themselves gratuitously. The real reason why it is absurd to suppose that artificial rules and regulations could establish equality of welfare among all members of the community is to be found in the fundamental truth that there is no real natural equality pervading all members of the human family, in the way the socialist takes for granted. All writers of the Tolstoy or the Bellamy type start with the assumption, as if it were an undeniable axiom, that every child that is born comes into the world on equal terms with every other, free of all previous claims or responsibilities, a new divine creation in each case set up by Providence with a stock in trade of limbs, appetites, and capacities, identically the same throughout the race, and constituting an equal credit on the accumulated resources of the race, if the selfishness of individual magnates had not enabled them to absorb more than their proper share. A great many blunders, more unfortunate even than those which have to do with political beliefs, arise from this absurd conception that each new child is a new creation. This idea has been somehow developed in the Western world through the stupidity of Christian theologians during the last dozen or so centuries. Not by any means because of their Christianity, for correctly speaking, primitive Christianity is wholly free from the delusion in question; but simply by reason of the stupidity which in that, as in so many other ways, has perverted the whole course of ecclesiastical teaching. But for the moment turning aside from the confusion imparted to religion and ethics by the complicated misconception referred to, let us concentrate our attention upon its bearing

on the dreams of the socialist, most of which avowedly rest on the theory that every human being comes into the world with equal claims on its consideration.

To begin with, those who comprehend the magnificent patience displayed by Nature in the gradual growth of a human individuality know that the process is one which in all cases involves the expenditure of enormous periods of time. This is not an opportunity that could be conveniently made use of for setting out at full length an explanation of the means and methods by which the occultist acquires his knowledge. These can be studied in the vast literature that has gathered round the subject in recent years. But for the moment it will be more convenient to deal with conclusions than with processes and reasons that lead to them. We know that a human ego is first of all differentiated from previous spiritual conditions in forms of a very primitive order. Subject to reservations which need not be considered in connection with the main course of the argument before us, everyone now living in civilised communities, whether in a lofty or a lowly station, has at some remote period in the past gone through life in presence of what would generally be called savage or barbaric conditions. With attention concentrated simply on the physical aspect of natural phenomena, modern biologists have grasped the idea that the human body is the product of a very slow and protracted evolution, the earlier stages of which were carried on under conditions very unlike those of modern civilisation. But neither the modern biologist nor the dunder-headed modern theologian have as yet grasped the corresponding idea that the human ego, soul or entity, call it what you like, that which really is the being we have to deal with as we look at a man, has itself been the product of an evolution equally protracted. Of course, that evolution has not been exactly concurrent with the physical

evolution of the body. Everyone now living must have a physical pedigree extending backward from son to father (or, what is perhaps more important, from daughter to mother), back through illimitable ages in which years are reckoned by the million rather than by the century. But there is no spiritual identity to be observed along that line of physical descent. Each man, as we look at him, has a spiritual pedigree, also, as certainly a fact, could we trace it back, as the other, in the course of which we should find him gradually developing the complicated attributes of intellect and morals of which he is now the accumulation, by virtue of a series of incarnations in bodies adapted by previous development to express his growth at each given stage of his progress. The spiritual pedigree is not a series of naturally linked forms like the pedigrees of modern life, to which such exaggerated importance is attributed. It is a single stream of consciousness, a trace impressed upon the imperishable records of the past, reaching back in an unbroken line to the period when the entity in question first of all emerged from the ocean of an undifferentiated animal life.

At the earlier stages of that huge process he was little qualified to reflect problems of social organisation. He was in a condition of mind represented amongst us by that of the child in its cradle opening observant eyes for the first time (as far as that personality is concerned) to the phenomena of Nature around. The primitive man, although involving in his subtle constitution potentialities that may relate him later on to the higher planes of existence, is for the time being a creature concerned alone with the observation of material facts around him. It is only after all but innumerable lives have been spent in that early condition that those which we call in their perfection the characteristics of the intellect begin slowly to accumulate around

the nucleus of unintelligent observation. In parenthesis we may observe that amongst the manifold absurdities engendered in modern thought for want of knowledge concerning the true method employed by Nature in developing a human ego, none are more ludicrous to the occultist than those that have to do with the commonplace attempt to account for what is called abnormal genius. Such attempts must indeed be grotesque whenever they are built on the ludicrous belief that each human being in every new cradle is a new work of the Creator. Were that so, genius or any abnormal faculty would indeed be an enigma of infinite profundity. But occult science accounts for the genius as readily as for the giant oak tree. The one is no more the growth of yesterday than the other, but the product of protracted evolution, the last stages of which merely represent the perfect result at which the world gazes in wonder, although in its last manifestation it probably impressed a generation that occupied the earth from ten to twenty centuries ago.

Now, coupled with these reflections, in order to obtain an accurate comprehension of modern society, we have to remember that the entities, with which the world is populated at the present moment, have commenced their pilgrimage through incarnation, at periods of time differing not by centuries, but by millions and tens of millions of years. Figures, however dazzling to the imagination, are hardly, it is true, worth using in this connection, because, however dazzling, they are for the most part inadequate. But, at all events, when the principle is comprehended, the main idea, which it is important to enforce, can be appreciated, if we use none but algebraical symbols for the periods that have to be taken into account.

Let our thoughts take one other departure before their various streams are concentrated on a single point. We

are all familiar with the old division of past times into the bronze, the iron, the stone ages. Gently setting aside the beliefs they profess on Sunday, all educated thinkers understand that in remote periods corresponding with certain geological strata, the inhabitants of the world were savages whose most complicated implements had been chipped from one bit of flint by another. That picture of the past is incomplete, but for the moment it will serve. It is recognised that after the Stone Age had been going on for an indefinite period, the use of metals gradually supervened, and mankind perfected the arts of mutual destruction by the invention of bows and arrows. No one professes to define the century in which more complicated civilisations first arose, but they are recognised as having arisen at some time or another, and the only serious thought to be found in this very broad conception of human growth, if we consider alone what may be regarded as the current cycle of progress, has to do with the way in which it ignores the manner in which the successive ages overlap each other. Looking at the present population of London, it is certain, considering the magnitude of the population, that some of the entities now in life must have passed through their stone age during an antiquity that is all but unfathomable by thought, while others have emerged from savage conditions in which the stone age was perpetuated here and there in holes and corners of the earth up to a relatively recent period. These need not be thought of as to blame for having so recently been immersed in savage conditions. They are no more to blame than the seedling sown last year is to blame for not being the giant tree, but, as a matter of fact, the seedling is younger than the tree, and the man, lately evolved from earlier races, is younger than he who has lived through myriads of lives since his corresponding emergence. And the younger entity has thus to

go through the experiences which the older went through myriads of lives ago, and now for anyone who has been patient enough to follow these converging lines of thought, it will be seen that the inequalities of life are not artificial in their character; are no more the product, fundamentally and intrinsically, of human selfishness, than the superior condition of the European as such, compared with that of the African pigmy, is explicable by any grasping selfishness of his.

No doubt as soon as this fundamental idea is realised it is necessary to guard it with many qualifications. One need not for an instant deny that social inequalities have been aggravated in their pressure by the arrogance of those in a position to oppress weaker members of the community. At the present age of the world, whatever opportunities for evil-doing are granted to any sections of the human race, we may be quite sure that multitudes will take advantage of them and exercise their privileges in their widest scope. But these in truth are the excrescences in the social order we have to criticise as we look around. The fundamental fact in a community consisting of those who are engaged in rough manual work, and others who enjoy the privileges of wealth and leisure, is a condition of things arising as inevitably from the operation of Nature's law as the differences of complexion to be observed when viewing mankind in a more comprehensive fashion as we think of it scattered over the two hemispheres. Exceptional conditions apart, the young people are doing the hard work, and the older people taking their rest. No doubt the conception seems terribly inexplicable to those who can look at nothing but the momentary manifestation before them. When the older who are taking their rest are represented, let us say, by the gilded youth of a luxurious aristocracy—the younger, who are doing the work, by the bent forms of aged plough-

men at their toil—the idea we have just presented may seem not a little absurd; but the absurdity lies merely on the surface, and, exceptions apart, which can easily be considered by themselves, it is a simple truth which must be recognised before social theories can be reconciled with reason, that, very broadly speaking, those who are born to the inheritance of leisure and privilege, and the opportunities of moral and intellectual culture, are those who are far older in evolution than the humbler classes engaged in manual labour. Their opportunities may be terribly misused, the grand privileges with which they have been endowed grievously neglected, and then in the patient course of the ages they will suffer in their turn for such misuse and neglect, except in so far—poor people—as they are merely victims of the stupid teaching around them, that has blinded their sight to the true nature of their responsibilities.

And, furthermore, it must be recognised (exceptions apart) that the lower classes are broadly, not merely younger, than those more comfortably circumstanced, but less completely endowed with mental qualifications arising from the protracted observation of life in all its varieties. They are bound to grope their way more or less painfully through the experiences of physical life before reaching the stages at which they can expect to be invested with leisure to digest the accumulations of their experience. This thought, properly apprehended, need not be held to imply that we are justified in being careless concerning the hardships and privations of the poor. The world at large is still very confused in its thinking, and apt to misunderstand all revelation of superior wisdom in the first instance. Undoubtedly it is the law of Nature, as we have shown, that society should be classified and stratified pretty much along the lines that have actually been followed, but it is equally the desire of Nature that the

progress of those on the lower strata should be promoted in all practicable and reasonable ways by those who have already ascended to the upper levels. If these fail to realise the duty of so doing, so much the worse momentarily for those whom they have neglected, so much the worse more than momentarily for those who have neglected their appointed tasks. But the help to be rendered should not be of the kind embodied in a meek response to the familiar epigram, "*ôte toi que je m'y mette.*" That is the blustering Radical's sole conception of the way in which socialism should be carried out, and the infinite foolishness it represents engenders in due course the brutal selfishness of the oppressor. But, however contemptible a shape that selfishness may often assume, incarnate wisdom itself would enjoin the superior officer of Nature, however ready to be self-denying, to retain his own place and his own authority.

And how is that idea compatible with the generally accepted theory of popular and representative government as the perfection of modern political intelligence?

The question opens up a very wide realm of thought. Few people will deny that the best imaginable government, as far as the results to be attained are concerned, would be that of a perfectly wise and benevolent despot. But as the services of such despots cannot readily be secured, the conventional belief is that democracy affords us the next best system of government, and, at all events, protects mankind from the miseries attending the rule of despots who are neither wise nor benevolent. And that much may be granted even by the philosophical observer. But problems of government are ill-understood unless people can survey the whole progress of human affairs from periods lying far back behind the records of literary history. There was a time for this world of ours when wise and benevolent despotism really prevailed amongst the young races belonging to civilisations

that have long been forgotten, and conditions of social happiness prevailed at such times in consequence, to an extent which has been observed with wonder and delight by those who are capable, by the exercise of unusually perfect faculties of clairvoyance, to look back across the gulfs of time to the periods in question. Under wise and competent control it is wholly unnecessary that any community, whether great or small, should include within its conditions the miseries of poverty and ignorance that modern cities exhibit in such dismal abundance. But, guided along the paths of a productive industry like so many docile children, the people of the early age above referred to gained little as regards their interior growth by the untroubled incarnations of the *régime* they enjoyed. We can see that for the progress of the race as a whole, for the progress of each individual entity belonging to it, it was necessary that periods of more strenuous effort, of trial and difficulty, should supervene. The disappearance from human affairs of that benevolent despotism so clearly shadowed forth in all the earlier traditions of "divine kings" was inevitable. The human family on the large scale, like the single family growing up to maturity, had to be left to fend for itself, and thus, in the great design of Nature, the idea of popular representative government gradually supervened, not, as the modern enthusiast or radical reformer imagines, because democracy and constitutional government are the best machinery for managing human affairs—the best product of political intelligence—but simply because it was necessary that mankind in the mass, as well as in the individual, should learn wisdom by feeling the consequences of its own blundering.

Bad kings come on the scene in fulfilment of Nature's programme to wean mankind from attachment to the royal idea, and undoubedly in some countries during modern times the conflict of the two systems has shown us democracy en-

gaged in abolishing abuses and defeating the selfishness of oppressors on a lower level than those who represented the degradation of monarchy. A time was in our own country not long since when democracy broke down much that was indefensible in the institutions of the *régime* immediately preceding it, and its achievements have served in various ways to disguise its true character, and to endear its methods to observers sympathising with human suffering, which, if they could only see more clearly, they would recognise, as in many cases, but the product of democracy itself. For the sufferings of the industrial army in its lower ranks are really the price paid for freedom, for individual liberty, for exemption from that stern discipline which could alone protect the idle and improvident from the consequences of their own shortcomings.

The neglect of all these thoughts, the disregard of the principles governing human evolution on a large scale, have given rise to all the amiable delusions of the modern socialist. Turn to Miss Clapperton's volume referred to above, immeasurably superior in its intellectual value to good Count Tolstoy's incoherent raving. Its whole drift is dictated, so far as it is concerned with economic problems, by a misapprehension of the causes that have given rise to the evils the authoress proposes to combat. She observes a condition in which the proletariat carries on its back, as Sindbad carried the Old Man of the Sea, the rich classes with their innumerable dependents, the army, the navy, the paupers, the criminals, the Royal Family, and the Government officials. "Slavery of the many for the comforts and enjoyment of the few," that is what humanity has attained to, so far, in the evolution of society. That is in reality the result accruing to society from the withdrawal of benevolent despotism and the transfer of power to the multitude.

Free scope is given in this way to the operation of in-

dividual selfishness. The vast differences in human capacities ensure the triumph of the selfishness which is most intelligent. The freedom of all enables those who can to get the better of their neighbours, and in truth "the slavery of the many for the comfort and enjoyment of the few" is the ultimate product of leaving the many in control of their own affairs. This does not mean that the social evils of the present period are to be borne as inevitable. We need not be denied the hope, that as loftier wisdom prevails the few will come to realise that responsibility attaches itself to privilege. By degrees the many, who will never really have the guidance of affairs except in stormy periods of revolution, will be guarded by the wiser few from the consequences of their own blundering, and in the spirally cyclic progress of mankind, conditions of government, somewhat resembling the benevolent despotisms of old, will return to us in a modernised condition. But the socialist, who imagines that by democratic methods this merciful change will be accomplished, reminds one of the German story concerning the bear who can think of but one way of combating an enemy. Scorched by a hot stove, the only thing that occurs to him to do is to hug it more vehemently. Just so the modern democrat, distressed by the spectacle of the human trouble that has really accrued from the vagaries of popular liberty, conceives that the only hope of the future resides in giving the populace more liberty still. Miss Clapperton presents the socialist case with unusual force, because with unusual moderation, but the answer is the same whether the complaint is couched in dignified language or in the rougher terms with which we are more familiar. "The extremity of contrast between rich and poor," we now read, "has no ethical justification. Why should one baby be born to an income of one hundred thousand a year and another to a constant struggle for a bare existence?" For an ethical

justification of Nature's ways we may sometimes search in vain, but an explanation of the contrasts referred to above will readily be discerned in the laws of Nature by the occult student. Inequalities of condition are as naturally ordained as inequalities of climate, and when in communities like ours they are sometimes grotesquely exaggerated, that has been the direct outcome of human folly mismanaging its own freedom. For the occult student the hope of the future resides entirely in the growth of that wisdom already dawning amongst the few, and in the absolute and unreserved abandonment of the socialist's fantastic dream !

# DR WALLACE'S VIEW OF CREATION

As a general rule, the progress of knowledge concerning the universe has tended to render advanced representatives of mankind modest rather than arrogant in estimating their own place in creation. The comprehension of the earth as simply one of many planets revolving round the sun, when in due course it superseded the earlier conception of an illimitable plain illuminated by lamps of varying magnificence hung in the heavens above, gave the first shock to human vanity in the Middle Ages. The mediæval church felt it seriously, and powerful theological arguments, the faggot and the rack amongst them, were directed to disprove the idea that a world governed by the successors of St Peter could do otherwise than engage the whole attention of its Creator. But as other planets of the solar family came within closer observation, the suspicion that they also might carry through space their respective burdens of souls to be saved forced itself on the attention of less prejudiced observers, and then the true character of the stellar universe threw the whole scheme of planetary life to which we belong into appalling insignificance. When distant suns, by the million, were recognised in their true character, the reasonable probability that they also were surrounded with life-bearing planets became too obvious to be overlooked. So by degrees the conception of worlds in infinite abundance scattered through space assumed

definite shape in the scientific mind, and was practically diffused through the intelligent world. Proof positive of such a condition of things was necessarily wanting. Certainties concerning distant stars are necessarily few in number, though they now include information which only a few generations ago no one would have conceived susceptible of transmission across interstellar spaces. On the other hand, indeed, more exact knowledge concerning the outer planets of our own family have led to a tolerably sure conviction that some of these, at all events, are not at present in a condition to bear any organised life even remotely resembling our own. That discovery merely emphasises the idea suggested by the geological history of the earth. However clearly destined to be the scene of intelligent life at some period of its career, every planet must go through phases of preparation, during which, if consciousness in any form is associated with it, this must inhabit vehicles of consciousness utterly different from those of the physical plane. So, therefore, the mere fact that the planet Jupiter is but just emerging from the incandescent state, and probably surrounded by an atmosphere in which all bodies known to us as liquids and volatile solids would be in the gaseous state, does not tend even to disprove the probability that at a later date Jupiter may be inhabited by an intelligent race perhaps destined to evolve on a plan commensurate with the magnitude of the world it will inhabit.

So, for some people probably, the problems connected with the other worlds of the universe have lain in the nebulous region of future conjecture, no one attempting to form any definite conception of facts beyond reach of precise observation for the moment, but not without hope that at some later date advanced resources of observation might enable mankind even to gain touch with some of

the other human families which are probably contemporary with ourselves. We indulge, of course, in mere guess-work in hoping that such possibilities may be developed as time goes on, but for people living in the earlier part of the last century it would have seemed equally extravagant to expect actual knowledge concerning the physical constitution of distant stars.

But suddenly, into the midst of opinions taking generally a hopeful turn, a highly respected veteran of science has hurled an extraordinary volume professing to point out considerations which rob the whole universe at one blow of all the worlds with which it had been peopled in our fancy, and maintaining the extraordinary position that we alone,—the humanity of this earth,—are the only race of intelligent organised beings in creation, the only race not only as regards the solar system, but as regards the whole starry universe to the utmost limits of the Milky Way! If it had been possible to regard the whole of Dr Alfred Wallace's contention embodied in his book, entitled *Man's Place in the Universe*, as a huge joke—a hoax played upon the imperfectly trained minds of the community at large—one could at least understand its purpose, but at Dr Wallace's time of life it is difficult to suppose that he would take the trouble to write a bulky volume of many hundred pages merely to work off a hoax of that description. We must look upon the scheme he has devised as an aberration of genius, the density of which one cannot but hope, in consideration of the author's many claims upon public respect, may be oblivion at the earliest possible date.

Meanwhile the subject he deals with is one of perennial interest, and the arguments he puts forward, interesting so far as they suggest to the reader conclusions diametrically the reverse of those which Dr Wallace reaches. What is the main framework of his argument? First of all he

claims for the solar system a central place in the visible universe, but by no hypothesis can this central place be defined with minute accuracy. He assumes the diameter of the visible universe, reckoning the Milky Way as its external circumference, at something like 3600 light-years. "Light-years," as all students of elementary astronomy will be aware, is a measure of distance adopted to save the inconvenience of counting stellar distances in miles. A mile is no more appropriate as a measurement in dealing with such distances than an inch would be in calculating the length of a voyage to Australia round the Cape, so the light-year is the distance over which light will travel in a year, moving at its appointed rate of 186,000 miles per second. Well, then, though Sirius, for example, is about eight light-years from the sun, what difference will such a trifle make as compared with the diameter of the Milky Way? It would be just as reasonable to assign the central place to Sirius or even to Arcturus as to claim it for our own solar system. When Dr Wallace's ideas were first thrown forward in the shape of articles in one of the monthly reviews, critics objected that the central place could not be continuously occupied by our sun, even though that were its position at the present moment; because, travelling through space at the rate it does, it would certainly, within the period of its existence, even measuring that merely by the known period of the earth's geological history, have carried it right across the whole area of space assigned to the visible universe. Dr Wallace thinks this objection sufficiently met by representing that its movement may not be continuously in a straight line, but round some centre which, however distantly removed in miles, may nevertheless retain it within the approximately central region where he desires to establish it permanently, but at all events, even granting the fullest value to this argument, it does not touch the objection

that obviously arises in connection with the claim to as good a central position as our own for the stars just named, or even for those which constitute the four corners of Orion.

Then the value of a central position will not seem to most people so great as it seems to Dr Wallace. The idea is that only in this central region of the visible universe can the life of a star be sufficiently stable and exempt from accidental collisions to persist long enough for the development around it of such slow processes as those involved in the evolution of mankind on this earth. Jumbled together in what he conceives the crowded region of the Milky Way, Dr Wallace supposes that suns are too continually in collision to favour the idea of their practical employment in the generation of life. One can hardly treat such an argument seriously, resting, as it does, upon such minute specks of knowledge concerning the conditions prevailing in the Milky Way, which are all that we have as yet to go upon. For the rest, returning to our own system, Dr Wallace's argument is to the effect that this earth alone occupies what he calls the temperate zone of the solar system, and is, therefore, alone qualified to nourish organisms depending on the delicate combinations of carbon and hydrogen, playing so large a part in the composition of the human body. Of course the obvious reply is one familiar to astronomical thinking for many years—that atmospheric conditions so seriously modify the effect of the solar rays on any given mass within their range, that without waiting for further knowledge than chemists already possess, it would be possible for us to prescribe an atmosphere that would render Venus or Mercury cool enough even for our habitation, or which, in the other direction, would provide Mars with an envelope capable of making such good use of the feebler rays reaching that orbit, as would enable them to warm up the surface sufficiently for the most exacting invalid.

With reference to Mars, indeed, we have not merely to rely on the abstract possibilities of the situation, but if we please we may follow the American astronomer Lowell, in his conclusions respecting the evidence that Mars is actually inhabited by intelligent beings who carry on engineering works on a scale which throws our own modest achievements in that line into the shade. The Martian canals, it is true, are still subject to contradictory interpretations. Astronomers who will accept no conclusions until they are fortified by the approval of orthodox authorities are inclined to slight Lowell's interesting observations. But at all events these go far enough to make us all feel reasonably certain that whether the canals are natural or artificial channels, the meteorological conditions of Mars are, at all events, quite compatible with the growth and development of animal life not remotely dissimilar from our own. The temperature on the surface of Mars is wavering at the poles about the freezing-point, and must be compatible, in the equatorial regions, with periodic changes which are most plausibly explained by assuming them to be due to the annual development and decline of crops and foliage. Indeed, so easy is it for us to understand the possibility of life on the orderly, well-regulated surface of Mars, that we might, without serious difficulty, construct an imaginary argument from that point of view that would justify a Martian Wallace in regarding the physical conditions of the earth as grotesquely incompatible with anything like human life.

Assuming for a moment, to make the reasoning more precise, that Lowell's conception of Martian meteorology is well founded, the Martian Wallace would be above all things impressed with the supreme necessity of a tranquil atmosphere, as alone compatible with the regularity of irrigation required to provide for the fertility of spring and the fecundity of harvest. He would argue, to begin with,

that a planet to be habitable must consist, in a pre-eminent degree, of land surfaces adapted to habitation. "From what we have made out of the earth," he would say, "it is obvious that more than two-thirds of that incomprehensibly useless planet is flooded with water and perfectly unfitted to maintain life. Nor in regard to the surviving remnant of possibly habitable land is it conceivable that human life could exist in the presence of the natural conditions which must prevail there. The heavy atmosphere with which the unhappy planet is girded, and which alone, of course, prevents it from being scorched from its proximity to the sun, must render it difficult to keep up any permanent division between the heavens above and the flood beneath. Huge volumes of water are continually ascending under the influence of solar heat to the upper regions of this stormy envelope, driven hither and thither by the wild commotions we can observe as actually in progress. They must discharge their clumsy contents in uncontrollable masses of water calculated to drown any beings on the remnants of land, and utterly to destroy the regularity of seasonal vegetation; nor even if these celestial cascades were absent would it be possible for the governing powers of an earthly humanity to design an irrigation system which would safely conduct to habitable regions a flow of moisture from the poles. The land surfaces are broken up into irregular fragments probably representing the chaotic consequences of some huge cataclysm in the past. Conceivably, the earth may once have been the seat of intelligent life, although this alone is to strain hypothesis almost too far. To suppose it inhabited in its present condition is to set at defiance all we know concerning the necessary conditions of human existence."

Dr Wallace's argument is not one whit less presumptuous than that of our imaginary Martian critic, and it is all the

more bewildering to find it coming from a man holding his convictions in other directions, because a confirmed Spiritualist should surely be amongst the last to argue that intelligence is only compatible with incarnation in physical flesh. With varying degrees of confidence, students of Nature belonging to the many schools in which her ultra-physical regions are regarded as legitimate fields of research, are satisfied that consciousness even belonging to orders higher than that which ordinary incarnate humanity represents may be embodied in matter which our physical senses cannot at present cognise. In truth, all speculations concerning the condition of other planets in space, turn, for advanced thinkers—*not* on the question whether it is conceivable that intelligent beings may somehow be enabled to exist there, but on simply the question whether such planets are or are not closely similar to this with which we are ourselves concerned. It will be very interesting, for example, to know, as, some day, the later races of this earth may know, whether the inhabitants of Venus are making use of organisms bearing any likeness to those of the earthly family. To say such questions can never be answered is to misunderstand the lessons of all knowledge that has been gained in the past. We need not go far back in history to reach a period at which the idea of actually determining the chemical constitution of distant bodies in the heavens would have seemed no less extravagant than to some of us still it may seem extravagant to hope for intelligible news from brother races in other parts of the system. But in any case, even if we should find that our humanity has a monopoly of the hydrocarbon compounds, it is quite possible that sooner or later we shall develop faculties which will enable us to cognise the existence of other races whatever orders of matter they may make use of in evolving their vehicles of consciousness.

# EARTHQUAKES AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES

THE earthquake itself is not altogether a mystery for science. It is generally recognised as a consequence of some slip or rupture in the rock strata constituting the earth's crust, due to the contraction of the whole mass as it gradually cools. The evidence of geology is too abundant in reference to such interior changes to be misunderstood. We find the actual strata crumpled up in all directions like the skin of a shrivelled apple, to use a favourite illustration, and the character of such crumpling generally suggests a sudden rupture at some time in the past, and no gradual process like those for which geologists as a rule have a marked preference.

And while the old conception of the earth's constitution —as a huge mass of molten matter at an enormously high temperature surrounded by a relatively thin crust—held its own, the conception that the crust in question would crinkle up as the heat of the interior mass gradually diffused away was very readily acceptable. To some extent, indeed, since then, he problem presented to the mind has assumed unforeseen complexity, because the notion that the earth is a molten mass surrounded by a relatively thin crust has long since been abandoned, owing to the impossibility of reconciling with that idea the continued maintenance by the earth of its definite shape. The matter of which it consists could not

retain that shape under the varying attractions to which its movements within the solar system subject it, unless, so mathematicians have long since affirmed, it were throughout at least as rigid as though it were composed of cold steel. So for most thinkers the old molten interior theory has been abandoned, without being definitely replaced by any other providing an interpretation for well-known facts, and geology has to remain content with many apparent contradictions in the phenomena it is able to observe.

Some superficial facts seem to support the old idea, for in almost all investigations having to do with deep borings the temperature of the earth rises about one degree of Fahrenheit for every 50 feet that we descend. If that progress is maintained we need not go down in imagination more than 20 or 30 miles at the most to reach a condition of things in which all the known metals would be in a fluid state and the heat in excess of anything that our resources on the surface enable us to command. How, then, are we to imagine that the main body of the earth is cold and rigid if somewhere not far beneath the surface its heat is enough to melt rock itself? Attempts to meet the embarrassment have been made by suggesting that even liquids, under the enormous pressures to which the interior of the earth is subject, would possess many of the qualities we associate with the idea of solids, and would be no longer in the mobile state generally thought of as an attribute of liquids. But the suggestion is unsatisfactory, and at all events conceptions of a very much more plausible kind are available for our use, if we take advantage not merely of the speculations so far available in geological text books, but also of those arising from observations of a kind with which the science of the twelfth century at all events was not generally concerned.

So far, of course, the theory of the earth's constitution which I am about to set forth need only be considered by

the reader as a theory to be judged in accordance with its merits, and with the manner in which it may or may not be found to harmonise with observed phenomena it may be employed to explain. By a few it may be recognised as belonging to a certain great body of teaching concerning the life-history of this planet which depends on methods of observation wholly unlike those employed in ordinary physical research. But in view of the practical impossibility, in an essay of this kind, of setting forth the reasons which may induce some students of occult science to treat the problems connected with the earth's interior as susceptible of definite investigation, it will be enough to offer the present account of the earth's constitution to the reader as a theory, relating to the manner in which the earth *may* have come into existence, and may thus have acquired attributes which explain the apparent anomalies referred to above.

Primitive conjectures concerning creation turn generally on the idea that huge results are accomplished, so to speak, instantaneously, when the Divine fiat goes forth. Experience of the manner in which creation proceeds all around us at the present day leads one to recognise the gradual character of most natural performances as one of their most striking features. The biggest tree begins with a very small seed; the largest animals are evolved from germs that are microscopically minute. The latest teachings of science point to the conclusion that all the matter with which we are familiar is built up by the aggregation of atoms the magnitude of which is almost beyond the reach of imagination in the direction of the infinitely little, and thus it is not unreasonable to imagine that the earth itself is a growth from beginnings small in comparison with its present girth. That all planets are brought into being in the first instance by the condensation of nebulæ is a view which is equally acceptable by astronomers and occult students. But it does not

follow that each planet of our system has been formed by virtue, so to speak, of one great aggregation of nebulous matter. Nebulæ in the heavens engaged in the process of engendering solar systems show us sometimes nuclei already evolved within the swirling spirals of chaotic material, and if these have ensued from the condensation of that material in such regions, there is still obviously a vast supply of it awaiting further use.

Suppose our earth at one time was such a nucleus, it may be that then its magnitude was insignificant compared to that which it has since attained. It is not unreasonable to imagine that subtler forces than those of mere gravitation and momentum are concerned with the process of planetary formation, and it is not extravagant to imagine that such forces may be intermittent in their operation. Let us assume, therefore, that nebular condensation gave rise, in the first instance, to a small planetary body, and that the forces that provoked this result were then in suspension for a time. That small planetary body would continue to revolve in its orbit, and may be thought of as gradually cooling down at the surface sufficiently to become solidified. Time may be assigned to all operations of this kind with unlimited generosity. But eventually the planet-making forces come once more into activity. Again, a great volume of nebulous matter is gathered around the original nucleus and condensed in the shape of a new shell surrounding the original body. We can imagine this enlarged globe careering through space in its orbit until in turn the outer shell, as regards its outer surface, cools down to a solid condition. Thus we are provided with a world in which the outer crust is hard, in which a layer of intensely heated matter lies within this, but within which, again, a solid nucleus is to be found if we go deep enough.

Again, allow the vast patience of Nature to operate

through protracted ages. The shell is now itself prepared to play the part of the original nucleus in a new condensation of nebulous matter. The old programme is repeated. A second shell thus grows over the first, and the stratification of the growing globe, as representing alternately solid and molten matter, is becoming more complex. So the work may go on until a series of concentric spheres shall have been built one over another—until at last the planet, having attained maturity, is allowed to engender on its latest surface the kingdoms of Nature providing for the higher evolutions to which we ourselves belong. These concentric spheres need not be thought of as thin relatively to the diameter of the whole planet. Clairvoyant observation tells us—or rather, let me say, adhering to the presentation of this story as a theory—the outer crust of the earth may have a thickness of about 800 miles. Below this, by the whole hypothesis, there must still exist a layer probably of some considerable thickness still glowing with the heat of the latest nebular condensation.

But how about observed phenomena which lead us to imagine that the glowing temperature would be encountered at 20–30 miles rather than at 800? Fertile imagination, or detailed information, whichever way we like to look at it, accounts for the embarrassing detail. The latest external shell which completes the body of the earth must, for obvious mathematical reasons, be thicker than those within, and beyond this may have some peculiar features appropriate to its condition as a permanent external envelope. These conditions might, perhaps, be supplied by a final top-dressing, so to speak, of nebular condensation on the outside of the thick external shell, when this should finally have been provided for. It is not unreasonable to imagine that for the peculiar purposes of evolutions to be carried out on the surface, greater variety of matter might be required

than for the actual structure of the planet's interior body, although it will not be necessary to discredit the versatility of Nature by supposing for a moment that the exterior evolutions are alone those with which the earth is concerned. One of the most attractive features of the theory here set forth is, indeed, to be discerned in the way it provides for a great variety of life conditions within, wholly different from those belonging to the surface of the sphere. Ordinary crude and foolish speculation as to where life may exist, and where natural conditions forbid the thought of it, are based of course on a narrow conception of *life*, as only compatible with bodies resembling those in current use amongst mankind. A broader conception of natural possibilities will point to the idea that no conditions of physical temperature need be thought of as incompatible with appropriate vehicles of consciousness. But into that branch of our comprehensive theory it is hardly necessary to go much further. The scientific value of the whole conception has to do with the manner in which it helps us to account for some of the natural mysteries in the category of those to which earthquakes belong, which no reasoning based on other conceptions concerning the earth's interior constitution will provide for in any satisfactory manner.

The earthquake itself has become a fairly intelligible phenomenon, because the slippings and crumblings of the rock strata within a few miles of the surface are enough to account for it. The earthquake, in short, belongs to the order of natural occurrences happening within that mere skin of the earth, the result of the very latest nebular top-dressing, and the thickness of which is not incorrectly indicated by the increase of temperature as we go down the deeper mines. But, after all, earthquakes are only one among several natural phenomena of the kind associated with interior convulsive forces. We must acknowledge that

we understand earthquakes but imperfectly so long as we fail to realise the connection which experience as well as instinct vaguely induces us to recognise between the earthquake and the volcanic eruption. Certainly records have constantly shown that great volcanic eruptions have been preceded by earthquakes in or near the neighbourhood of their occurrence. And the latest great earthquake in India, which has been turning public attention to the subject so earnestly of late, is obviously connected in some way with the volcanic outburst reported from the mountain ranges a little further to the north.

We shall be the better able to harness the earthquake and the volcano together as two effects from one cause if, in the first instance, we realise the intensely unsatisfactory and insufficient character of most conventional theories made use of to support the varied guesses that, from time to time, have been set forth to account for volcanic eruptions. Sometimes an effort has been made to attribute the forces of the volcano to chemical action beneath the surface of the earth, between such metals as sodium or potassium, and water, which may reach them by filtration from the ocean beds. This theory, utterly insufficient to account for the facts, was tempting to some imaginations when the peculiar behaviour of the alkali metals with water was first discovered, just as, at the present day, discoveries connected with radio-activity and the new element which exhibits this power in the greatest degree have provoked various extravagant conjectures concerning the constitution of the sun. But when the chemical theory of earthquakes was practically abandoned, the percolation theory still held its own. This idea was to the effect that somehow volumes of sea-water found their way through crevices in the rock strata to regions of very high temperature. Thus a volcanic eruption became a steam-boiler explosion on a large scale, and the fact that steam is emitted by volcanoes

in enormous volume seemed to fortify the guess. But, in truth, volcanoes emit molten rock as well as gaseous water, and the steam-boiler theory will wholly fail to account for lava, dust, or ashes. Nor, if we begin to speculate, on the basis of such a theory, concerning the earth's constitution as set forth above, shall we help ourselves to any satisfactory conjecture even by assuming that sea-water actually finds its way down 20 or 30 miles to that heated region in which no doubt molten rock exists, and from which it might be vaguely possible to surmise that some of it would be hurled to the surface in connection with the steam of a vast explosion. Allowing in imagination that sea-water could percolate to such a depth, the forces of a steam explosion engendered in that way would be inadequate to account for the result, and in many ways that it is hardly worth while to examine the idea in detail; the theory would not fit the facts.

The theory that *will* fit the facts requires us to descend in search of the forces which actually engender a volcanic eruption to the nearest great region of enormous heat and pressure lying beneath the outer shell—between that and the next of the concentric shells which constitute the earth. Here we have matter in a condition of heat and pressure that will account for all the phenomena with which we have to deal. The explanation required is one which will provide for the partial escape of these stupendous forces lying at a depth some 800 miles beneath our feet. The earthquake in reality provides us with this explanation. As geologists quite correctly conjecture, the whole external shell of the earth is still slightly contracting. As time goes on, and a deeper and deeper mass is cooled, the diffusion of interior heat is lessened almost to the vanishing-point, but it still does continue, and, therefore, it still happens from time to time that some slipping amongst themselves of the rock

strata, some crumpling of their folds, although insignificant in magnitude compared with those of the past, are possible. And when such a slipping, rift, or rupture occurs, a leakage is established through which the stupendous forces of the hot zone can escape. Now these forces consist,—as a matter of fact, or may be assumed to consist, if the reader prefers that expression,—very largely of steam, but of steam at a temperature and pressure that no experiments on the surface of the earth will enable us to realise. Such steam would, of course, be at a temperature enormously in excess, for example, of the melting-point of platinum, and its energies would be enhanced in a corresponding degree. Rushing upwards through the crevices created by the earthquake disturbance, its heat is great enough to melt the rocky walls between which it passes, and its pressure great enough to carry some of the molten mass upwards. And the result is finally manifest at the surface in the shape of a volcanic eruption, including not merely steam itself,—which at last in the cool regions of the atmosphere liquefies in the condition of torrential rain,—and not merely molten rock brought up from great depths, but also great varieties of debris accumulated by the passage of the volcanic current through the varied strata lying near the surface.

Of course, the whole of this elaborate conjecture is so unfamiliar to ordinary thinking that only those who are deeply impressed with the limitations of ordinary thinking will open their minds readily to its reception. But, in truth, the facts of volcanic history correspond with this theory in a curiously exact fashion, and the records of geology confirm it. Glance for a moment at observations that have been made concerning the volumes of steam emitted by volcanoes. During the eruption of Etna, in 1865, careful observation showed that during the hundred days of its activity the volume of steam emitted was equivalent to about

2¾ million cubic yards of water.[1] Figures in such groups as these mean little to ordinary imagination. The quantity would fill a reservoir 700 yards wide, 2½ miles long, and 30 feet deep. But why, it may be asked, does the eruption come out through a cylindrical crater when the theory would rather suggest an elongated rift along the surface? Geological history provides the answer. At earlier periods of the earth's growth when the contraction of the outer shell was proceeding more rapidly, and the chasms created by this crumpling were much greater than of recent years, volcanic eruptions did take the shape of vast overflows emerging from elongated rifts in the surface. The geology of North America is specially endowed with evidence to this effect. And as these vast fissures closed, in time they established, throughout the world, lines of relative weakness, still traceable on the map, as the well-known areas of volcanic activity. And along these lines of weakness there will be necessarily spots, as it were, of greatest weakness, the craters, in fact, of modern volcanoes.

Another little bit of testimony harmonising with our general theory is provided by the experience of modern seismology. At an earthquake station like that of Professor Milne in the Isle of Wight the tremors that announce a distant earthquake arrive in three instalments. The recording instrument first gives a peculiar wriggle. A little later this wriggle is repeated, but very much more violently. Then after a considerable interval, perhaps amounting to three-quarters of an hour, if the earthquake under record is far away, the self-same wriggle is repeated with diminished amplitude with a violence intermediate between that of the first and the second. It is obvious that these three signals must be due to the same earthquake. Why do they occur

[1] See *Volcanoes; their Structure and Significance*, by T. G. Bonney, F.R.S.

in this manner? Because the first, it is assumed, comes by the shortest cut through the body of the earth. The second travels through the rocky strata of the surface going the shortest way round. The third is, again, a superficial tremor which goes the long way round, whichever direction that may be. But why is the first direct signal feeble in its character comparatively? Conventional explanations are content with suggesting that the greater density of the deeper strata through which it passes must explain its enfeebled character. A much more satisfactory explanation—one, that is to say, better in harmony with the usual manners and customs of vibrations—is derived from the concentric sphere system set forth in this paper. The direct message passes successively through strata of very varying density, and acoustic science is familiar with the fact that the passage of sound, for instance, through strata of varying density greatly diminishes its energy. Certainly it would be going too far to say that the character of seismological indications is a proof of the general theory here suggested, but, at all events, it seems to harmonise with that theory in rather a pretty way.

For most of us, of course, all speculation concerning the interior of the world *on* which but by no means *in* which we live must remain destitute of any firm scientific guarantee. Nor can it be hinted that the explanations here put forward are proved, however well they may be in harmony with various circumstances connected with volcanic eruptions. But only those who remain quite resolutely outside the idea of the newer science which avails itself of abnormal human faculties as instruments of research will be scornfully indifferent to the statement I am in a position to make, that the general view of the whole subject here defined is the product of superphysical investigation, and in no way available for being credited to the brilliant resources of my own imagination.

# PROFESSOR MENDELÉEF'S CONCEPTION OF THE ETHER

THE scientific world has from time to time been under the influence of various theories concerning the ether. We need not go very far back to come in contact with a period when one such theory was to the effect that no such thing existed. That is only the inverted statement of the fact that up to the middle of the last century the ether was always referred to as a "hypothetical" medium invented to account for some phenomena that could not otherwise be explained. Then by degrees, as the undulations of light came to be more closely and exactly studied, it was seen to be entirely impossible to do without ether, but the attributes assigned to it were bewildering and contradictory in a very extraordinary degree. At one time a favourite illustration used to account for some of its properties compared it to a jelly pervading all space, mobile but incompressible. For a long while this conception so far held its ground that the ether was resolutely denied the molecular or atomic structure supposed to belong to all other material bodies. In the course of a lecture at the London Institution in 1880, Sir Oliver Lodge summed up existing knowledge on the subject in these terms:—

"As far as we know it appears to be a perfectly homogeneous incompressible continuous body, incapable of being resolved into simpler elements or atoms; it is, in fact, con-

tinuous, not molecular. There is no other body of which we can say this, and hence the properties of ether must be somewhat different from those of ordinary matter. But there is little difficulty in picturing a continuous substance to ourselves, inasmuch as the molecular and porous nature of ordinary matter is by no means evident to the senses, but is an inference of some difficulty.

"Ether is often called a fluid, or a liquid, and again it has been called a solid, and has been likened to a jelly because of its rigidity; but none of these names are very much good; all these are molecular groupings and therefore not like ether; let us think simply and solely of a continuous frictionless medium possessing inertia, and the vagueness of the notion will be nothing more than is proper in the present state of our knowledge."

That view of the subject seems to have held its own up to a recent period, and perhaps has not yet been recognised as overthrown by any general concensus of scientific opinion. The first serious challenge directed against the homogeneous theory was that embodied within the last twelve months by Professor Osborne Reynolds in the course of his somewhat startling contributions to the literature of the Royal Society. He adopts a distinctly molecular theory of the ether, but one which is very far from ranging it side by side with any other molecular fluid with which we are acquainted. Our purpose for the moment, however, is not to attempt the extremely difficult task of epitomising Professor Reynolds' views. No matter how striking some of the evidence he advances on its behalf may be, the whole body of speculation which his theory represents has quite lately been swept aside by the great Russian chemist, Professor Mendeléef, who has published a short essay, entitled *An Attempt towards a Chemical Conception of the Ether.*

The course of his speculation will be interesting in a high

degree to all students of science. His great reputation as the discoverer of the Periodic Law discernible in the characteristics of the chemical elements, and the estimation in which his work has been generally held, will render it impossible for anyone to treat his present conception with indifference, severely even as it may strain some long-established impressions. Summing up his present argument very briefly, he regards the ether as in effect an ultra-rarified gas, distinctly molecular in its character, and endowed with a molecular velocity which renders it indifferent to the gravitational influence, not merely of the planets, but of the suns in space. There is no half-hearted ambiguity in his declaration. A few sentences selected here and there from the present essay will show how boldly he has declared his belief.

"The ether may be said to be a gas like helion or argon, incapable of chemical combination."

"In calling ether a gas, we understand a fluid in the widest sense, an elastic fluid having no cohesion between its parts."

Mendeléef has arrived at these conclusions under the influence of thoughts suggested by the recent study of radio-active bodies. But he describes his present conclusions as resulting from an "extrapolation" of the periodic law. "Extrapolation" is a somewhat unfamiliar word, but it signifies the mental process which assumes that a law holding good up to a certain point will hold good in regions beyond experimental investigation. As for the periodic law, very familiar under that title to all students of chemistry, it may be worth while here briefly to explain that its main significance is as follows:—If we group the known chemical elements in successive series of sevens, in the order of their increasing atomic weights, the seventh of each series will correspond in its most striking

chemical characteristics with the sevenths of other series. Each note of the octave, in fact, has a note in the octave above with which it is in unison. Now, hitherto, hydrogen has been taken as the first note of the first octave, and the law represented by the grouping he adopts is so abundantly confirmed that Mendeléef in his present essay ventures to speak of it as an absolute law. Now, however, that we have to take into account various gases that were unknown at the time the periodic law was first enunciated, those which Professor Ramsay has discovered in the atmosphere, Argon, Crypton, Xenon, and the rest,—besides the all-important Helium, which encourages us to believe that in time we shall also get hold of Coronium,—Mendeléef has been encouraged to extrapolate the periodic law backwards, so to speak, and to establish in the rear of the hydrogen group one which he now calls the "zero" group, which actually, if his bold guess is to be relied on, carries us back to a substance, called "X" for the moment, which *is*, in point of fact, atomic ether. Another as yet conjectural element belonging to the zero group, to be called "Y" for the present, would be Coronium, or some other gas with a density of about 0·2.

As regards "X" itself, Mendeléef quotes, apparently without objecting to the idea, conclusions which he says Lord Kelvin arrived at some time ago in attempting to estimate the theoretical weight of the ether. It might perhaps be urged that to assign weight to a body the characteristics of which enable it to triumph over the laws of gravitation is somewhat unreasonable, but, at all events, the figures used help us to realise the scientific conception of rarity as applied to the ether. Lord Kelvin's estimate is as follows:—"While a cubic metre of hydrogen would weigh 90 grs. under atmospheric pressure, the weight of a cubic metre of ether would be 0·000,000,000,000,000 1 grm."

Expressed in words, that would mean that a cubic metre of ether would weigh a thousandth part of a million-millionth part of a gramme. As the gas to which this mass is assigned becomes by current hypothesis the medium by means of which the forces of gravitation are exercised, the anomalous nature of the calculation is very bewildering.

Nor is it our purpose at present to put forward the arguments in its favour. The great interest of Mendeléef's present conception, from the point of view of those who at the same time may watch scientific progress and also give an ear to the discoveries of occult science, turns on this remarkable fact: that the conception of the ether now put forward by the great Russian chemist was explicitly anticipated about nine years ago by certain explanations published at that time in theosophic literature, as the result of a special research carried out by certain occult students endowed with the necessary clairvoyant faculties in reference to the constitution of matter. The results of this research are described in the periodical now called the *Theosophic Review*, then published under its earlier name *Lucifer*, for 15th November 1895. Imperfectly developed as it was, and interrupted by circumstances that impeded its further progress, this research not merely led to the appreciation of the ether along lines very closely corresponding with those which Mendeléef is now working upon, but really carries the conception a great deal further than the limits which his boldest extrapolation will enable him to reach.

The object in view in the first instance in connection with the research referred to was not so much to investigate the composition of the ether as to determine the actual nature of physical atoms. Here it becomes desirable to say a few words concerning the nature of clairvoyant vision when cultivated under intelligent guidance to the highest

degrees of its potentiality. It becomes not merely a means of observing distant places or penetrating opaque obstacles, it has both the microscopic and telescopic capacities developed almost to infinity in both directions. The best microscope provided by the optician, beautiful as it is at the present day compared with some of its relatively savage ancestors, is an instrument of very limited range compared to the microscopic sight of a clairvoyant who can freely employ that which occultists describe as "astral vision." That kind of microscope has no limitations, and can be tuned, so to speak, to deal with any part of the interminable path leading in the direction of the infinitely little. Does the reader grasp the conception of molecular magnitude as understood by ordinary science? The favourite illustration is that the molecules of a drop of water bear about the same relation to the drop that bodies somewhere between the magnitudes of cricket balls and small shot would bear to the Earth. And yet one of these molecules can be separately observed by those who are gifted with appropriate astral vision and its constitution examined in detail.

If such an atom of any metal be chosen for observation, it will be found that its complexity is so overwhelming as practically to defy accurate description. But the complexity of individual atoms of any given chemical element varies in exact proportion with their atomic weight. While an atom of gold, for example, is seen to contain some thousands of subordinate atoms arranged in a definite structure and moving amongst themselves with the symmetric rhythm of a minute solar system, the atom of the lightest element known, hydrogen, is somewhat more easily describable.' It consists of only eighteen of these primary atoms, discerned to be to all intents and purposes identical in their individual nature, except in so far as some of them have attributes which may be vaguely described as positive, and others those of a

corresponding negative kind. With these details for the moment it is not necessary to concern ourselves. The particular result of the occult investigation we are dealing with is to the effect that all the chemical elements known to us, however varied their properties, consist of atoms, the structure of which is widely different, but the composition of which is so far identical throughout, that primary atoms of the same order are concerned with building up all of these dissimilar bodies. The houses built differ widely in architecture and magnitude, but the bricks used are in all cases the same. When this great fundamental principle was realised it became also apparent that these atoms, the primary atoms of inconceivable minuteness, were dispersed throughout space, even interpenetrating the molecular structure of the physical bodies perceptible to our senses, and that, in point of fact, these primary atoms were atoms of the universal ether.

So far the idea is simply identical with Mendeléef's present conception, although if it passes into general acceptance it will no doubt be associated in the future with his name and not with those of the unknown authors of the occult investigation. That will be a matter of infinitely small interest to the persons concerned, for occult knowledge dealing with many other problems besides the constitution of ether reduces worldly fame to an importance, as compared with the permanent conditions of the ego, that might be fairly well expressed by Lord Kelvin's fraction quoted above. It is more important, however, that the world at large should realise that all the really great advances to be expected in future in connection with the progress of those studies which deal with the attributes of matter must be looked for in connection with methods of research which at present fall under the ban of popular disapproval as occult.

The information derived from the occult research we have

been describing does not stop short at investing us with the conception of the ether as consisting of extremely minute atoms dispersed throughout space. The further explanation of its nature must be overtaken by orthodox discovery sooner or later, and meanwhile we may venture on a forecast of the direction such later discovery will take. As will be seen from Professor Mendeléef's book, as also from the writings published so far by Professor Reynolds, speculation along familiar lines has always taken for granted that the ether is uniform throughout in its character, whatever that may be. Whether as a homogeneous jelly or as an ultra-rarified gas, it has been thought of always as a definite form of matter. The occult research of 1895, however, partly overtaken, as has been shown by physical discovery, discerned several varieties of ether as actually existing under conditions which eluded ordinary chemical observation. Four distinctly different kinds of ether play their respective parts in the great natural activities with which this medium is concerned, and it is only when primary atoms are completely dispersed so that they are separately diffused through space that we arrive at that which may be called the elementary condition of ether. Between this condition and that in which a sufficient number of atoms are aggregated together to constitute a substance with attributes manifest to the physical senses, there exist three varieties of what it may be convenient to call "molecular ether."

From the point of view of the knowledge we are endeavouring to set forth, it is impossible to continue the use of the terms "atom" and "molecule" in precisely their conventional significance. For readers unfamiliar with the technicalities of physics, it may be as well to explain that when a chemist speaks of a "molecule" of any given known substance, he means two atoms of that substance in a mysterious kind of union. This method of thinking was

adopted to facilitate the expression, by chemical formulæ, of the composition of compound bodies. Without the hypothesis in question chemists would have been drawn into the embarrassment of assuming that in some cases the molecule of a combined body contained half-atoms of some of its constituents. Occult research, however, shows this method of thinking to be out of harmony with natural truth, although it fits some of the facts. When it comes to be recognised that the atom of each chemical element contains a multitude of etheric atoms, and that the union between two elementary substances involves a complicated interaction amongst their respective primary atoms, the word molecule will cease to have this artificial and inaccurate meaning. For our present purpose, and anticipating what will probably be the practice of chemists in the future, it will be convenient to reserve the word atom for application to those fundamental particles which constitute the simplest variety of ether, and to employ the term "molecule" to signify the single organised structure which can be recognised as a chemical element on this plane. For some time, indeed, the conventions of language are so embarrassing that if we speak of the hydrogen molecule or the molecule of any other substance we are liable to mislead the ordinary thinker into supposing that we mean the conventional molecule of two atoms, so that it may still be convenient to speak of the atom in reference to the indivisible particle of any given substance, even though that may contain hundreds of atoms properly entitled to the name.

And here it may be convenient, before going on to indicate what little is known concerning the molecular varieties of ether, to indicate the probabilities arising from such observations concerning the actual number of atoms in the molecules of the known elements in so far as that number has been observed. In reference, at all events, to

oxygen and nitrogen, it turns out that the number of atoms in each molecule of these substances is exactly equal to the product of the atomic weight and the number 18, which represents the number of atoms in the molecule of hydrogen. If this law holds good throughout, it enables us to determine with precision the number of atoms entering into the composition of the molecules of any known substance, and when we come to deal with substances the atomic weights of which are over 200, it will be seen that each molecule includes several thousands of ultimate atoms, and thus it is not difficult to conceive that in such cases the ultimate limits of stability have been reached, and that the phenomena of radio-activity are to be readily explained along the lines of thought suggested by this condition.

But going back to the varieties of molecular ether, these appear to be ruled off one from another by limitations relating to the number of atoms entering into the composition of their molecules. The 18 atoms in the molecule of hydrogen represent two distinct groups of 9 atoms each, interlaced in a curious fashion which could hardly be described in words, or even shown by a diagram. A model in three dimensions would be necessary to make the arrangement intelligible. But the highest or most complicated form of etheric molecule may be represented by either of these groups taken separately and disentangled from its partner. We need not assume that all ether of this kind, which may conveniently be called "ether 4," consists exactly of such molecules as the separate hydrogen groups would represent. Other combinations of 9 or 7 would still belong to "ether 4." As yet it is impossible to be very precise in defining the limits in each case, but ethers 3 and 2 consist of molecules embodying some smaller numbers of atoms than those which make up the

molecules of ether 4, and one interesting thought connected with this part of our explanation carries us back to Professor Mendeléef's recent speculations. Ethers 2, 3 and 4 will go very far towards filling up the vacant places in that zero series which he now adds to his periodic table, the refinements of which culminate in his "X" substance identical with atomic ether.

The extent and manner in which the different varieties of ether may be diffused through space must as yet remain a matter of speculation even for those who avail themselves most fully of the occult information at our disposal. It may be, and for various reasons appears probable, that the more complex orders of ether are subject to gravitational influence, and therefore aggregated around the planetary bodies. That the atomic ether is for some reason entirely exempt from the influences of gravitation appears to be a conclusion we cannot but accept, and one, indeed, which Mendeléef himself adopts. But if molecular ether does surround each planet as a highly refined atmosphere, it may, at some future date, be found very helpful in interpreting many optical phenomena connected with light and colour. If, in pursuit of this idea, we were to soar upwards into the loftier regions of speculation "on the wings of extrapolation," as one scientific lecturer once put the idea, we might expand that last suggestion to very magnificent proportions, but that is hardly the purpose with which this essay has been written. The scientific world has been interested if not startled by a new view of one amongst the most important of its hitherto unsolved problems, and that new view, as far as it goes, is in direct harmony with the foolishly neglected teachings of occult science. To show this plainly has been the purpose of the present writer, and there for the moment the matter may be allowed to rest.

# THE ORIGIN OF LIFE

For most purposes of ordinary thinking the Darwinian theory of evolution provides a sufficient reply to the question, prompted by the present condition of this globe, "How were the animal and human forms with which the world is peopled first brought into existence?" Although it is only in imagination that the process can be followed back to its very early stages, the great biologist showed that the variations of animal forms within the range of observation were enough to suggest the generalisations embodied in the well-known phrases, "sexual selection" and the "survival of the fittest." The profusion of Nature in squandering her materials—manifest in so many ways—enables us to accept the idea that in the processes of selecting the fittest for survival she is willing to cast off, with infinite recklessness, the vast multitudes of the less fitted. In the struggle for life the best forms maintain their existence and perpetuate their characteristics, and, in this way, an ever-ascending series of better and better forms culminates in the production of organisms suited to maintain advanced forms of animal life, and ultimately to give rise to human conditions. We are left at liberty to carry back the process in imagination until the simplest varieties of microscopic life are recognised as containing within their potentialities the possibility of ultimate development practically without a limit.

Thinkers, it is true, who may be disposed to suspect the existence of influences in the world of a somewhat more delicate character than those which have simply to do with the blind impulses of the animal kingdom, may be inclined to regard the Darwinian theory as a view of Hamlet which omits the part of the prince. As conceivable, perhaps, as the operation of the forces which the Darwinian conception recognises, the intervention of some conscious agencies on planes of Nature beyond the range of physical observation may be considered as a hypothesis. Their energies, in some as yet unintelligible way, may direct and control the variation of forms through successive generations independently of, or at all events as supplementing, the influences recognised by the ordinary biologist. But even if such intervention be accepted as probably in operation, we are left—as entirely as by the other hypothesis—without any clue to the comprehension of the way in which, in the first instance, germs of organic life were established on the planet in its infancy.

The one thing we may feel certain about in connection with the earliest phases of our world's existence arises from the conviction we must all entertain, that, at one time in the course of its evolution from the original nebulæ, the solid globe we now inhabit was a mass of highly incandescent matter, existing at a temperature which precludes the idea that any, even of its more volatile solids, could have been in any other state but that of highly heated gases; while matter which still remains with us in the liquid and gaseous forms could only have been a widely diffused nimbus surrounding the glowing nucleus. And even when solidification may be thought of as having taken place, there would necessarily have been a stage at which the surface of the solid globe was still at a temperature utterly precluding the idea that it bore any organisms of the kind which, on the Darwinian hypothesis, could have

started the process of organic evolution. The question how, in the first instance, when the period came at which the globe had cooled down sufficiently to bear organic forms, the earliest of these were actually developed on its surface, is one which has engaged more scientific thinking than its very rare discussion in connection with biological science would lead the casual observer to suppose. The question, in fact, has always been regarded as one of those which are practically insoluble, and, like the mystery of gravitation, is discreetly shunned, as a rule, by those who have felt unable to contribute a reasonable suggestion tending in the direction of an answer. From time to time, indeed, wild guesses have been formulated. Logical thinkers have appreciated the absurdity of discussing a vast theory of organic evolution which rests on no visible foundation. The scientist may ridicule the mediæval theologian. Adam and Eve, even for the modern preacher of the more advanced type, may vanish in the mists of allegory, but no one who tenders a willing submission to the fundamental principle, "*ex nihilo nihil fit*," can disguise from himself the embarrassing reflection that the first amœba is no more easily to be thought of as envolved from nothing, by Divine Will, than the first man—ruthlessly torn from his original setting in the Garden of Eden by modern scientific thought. Protoplasm in its simplest form, when once in a planet's possession, may be held sufficient to account for all subsequent developments of life, but the simplest speck of protoplasm is so essentially different from the subtlest combination of inorganic molecules, that scientific speculation, as a rule, has been reluctant even to conceive its original development as a product of any such combination. To some extent, indeed, even that reluctance has given way in face of the absolute necessity of supposing that the earliest protoplasmic germs came into existence somehow. The desperate hint that they may have floated over here from the

wreck of former worlds on the backs of meteoric messengers has hardly been regarded as doing more than emphasise the hopeless difficulty of the problem.

Cutting away the branch on which it rested, scientific investigation has, none the less, more and more resolutely determined, as recent years advanced, to reject the conception of spontaneous generation. But while denied as a phenomenon of our own period, even that idea has been played with in imagination by some, at all events, of the great biologists of the nineteenth century. Huxley himself, as quotations from his writings brought forward in the course of a recent newspaper correspondence, in which Sir Oliver Lodge and other distinguished men of science have taken part, is shown to have been willing to accept, as at all events a provisional hypothesis, the idea that in the beginning Nature may have developed organic cells from inorganic materials. And carrying out the idea to its logical conclusions, Sir Oliver Lodge has been inclined to recognise as a conceivable hypothesis the discovery at some future period by human science of the method by which this apparent miracle may be accomplished. The conjecture is logical undoubtedly, just as every *reductio ad absurdum* hangs logically to its antecedent formulæ. But simply by means of a faint collateral illumination cast upon the whole problem from departments of ultra-physical enquiry in which the ordinary biologist has not yet found a footing, it is possible, at all events, to suggest a method by means of which Nature may have accomplished the seeming miracle by methods lying within the domain of universal law, subject to which her processes are carried on at the present day, and within the operation of which it was possible for her to start the processes of evolution even when the conditions of the problem were as unlike those of the present day as the "earth with verdure clad" is unlike the fiery globe of incandescent

matter which undeniably at one time occupied its place in the system.

To interpret the idea which it may thus be possible to contribute to the great controversy concerning the origin of life, it may be well to remind the reader that modern scientific speculation, assisted by the discoveries that have been recently made concerning the properties of radium, tends now, or even does more than tend, in the direction of recognising the ideas connected with the origin of the inorganic globe itself, that have long been familiar to the students of super-physical science. The inorganic molecules of the kind known as those of the chemical elements are themselves, of course, complicated structures built up of immeasurably more minute atoms of physical matter which themselves represent the ultimate material of inorganic substances, the ultimate atom underlying all varieties known to chemistry; long suspected by chemists of the more imaginative temperament; long since identified by occult research as the atomic condition of the ether pervading space, and now all but acknowledged in that capacity by the students of radium emanations. We are hardly going in advance of accepted scientific conclusions in treating the "electron" as identical with the universal ether, our theory of which need now no longer be embarrassed by the early conception that this medium differed from all other orders of matter in not being atomic. It may freely be acknowledged that many phenomena connected with its vibrations seem for the moment rather embarrassed than explained by the recognition of its atomic character, but these we may leave aside for the moment as outside the relationship between atomic ether and molecular matter which, at all events, is rapidly assuming a definite aspect. The ether itself is the protyle that has long been thought of as the medium in which, under the operation of

forces still undiscovered, the various chemical elements were at first engendered. And thus the conception of the whole process of world creation at its nebular stage assumes a reasonable shape in the imagination. The condensation of etheric atoms gathered in from huge volumes of space may account satisfactorily for the origin of the world as far as its rocky foundations are concerned.

And now we turn to another view of the antecedent conditions in the universe, which undoubtedly as yet remain without the experimental evidences which have supported the etheric origin of inorganic matter, but which, at all events, that great theory, now approaching establishment, may help us to comprehend or even to recognise as something more than probable. No reasonable student of Nature will hastily assume that any of her aspects coming within the range of observation preclude the idea that others may be concurrently existing which up to the present time have eluded research. In gaining touch with varieties of matter which our immediate predecessors in physical research failed altogether to anticipate, reasonable intellectual modesty may well forbid us to assume that the atomic ether, now all but recognised as diffused throughout infinity, sums up the whole of the contents of space. Considering, indeed, the infinite complexity of Nature, we may go the length of saying that it is practically certain we have not yet put together anything resembling a complete catalogue of its contents. Now one simple guess as to what infinite space may hold in addition to etheric atoms—sufficient in themselves to account for the existence of visible worlds—will go far towards removing the difficulties which have hitherto barred the way to a harmonious theory concerning the origin of life.

We start with the acceptance of what seems the obvious fact within our observation, that something inherently

different distinguishes the most minute *organism* we can think of from any equally minute molecule of inorganic matter. The cell is generally regarded as the most minute portion of organic matter that it is worth while to talk about, and though the cell is recognised as a complicated structure, including within its minute fragment of protoplasm a nucleus and a nucleolus, both endowed with mysterious attributes, it can only be thought of as built up of atoms immeasurably more minute than itself. Now, if we think of these atoms as simply etheric atoms of the kind considered above, we are brought back to the unsatisfactory position that the most minute molecule of organic substance is nothing more than a compound of inorganic atoms like any ultimate molecule of gold or oxygen gas. There is something so inherently different in the most minute portion of a living substance, as compared with the most complex molecule of inorganic matter, that this inference is profoundly unacceptable to the mind. Either a something of a material order, the nature of which is, as yet, wholly beyond our conception, has been super-added to the combination of etheric atoms making up the cell, or what for various reasons will, on consideration, be thought a simpler hypothesis, the cell itself is built up wholly or partly of atoms differing fundamentally in their nature from those hitherto described as etheric.

Let us turn now for a moment to the consideration of what we know concerning the most minute portions of living matter with which observation can directly deal. The often-quoted amœba is, of course, a giant compared to these. In search of the most minute molecule of organic matter we must first come back to the most minute masses thereof which the microscope can recognise and consider. The bacterium comes within the range of microscopic observation, although but just within the range. But the

germ from which the bacterium is developed,—the seed which grows that relatively massive creature,—eludes microscopic observation altogether. To test the presence of such seeds in any suspected substance, this has to be left for a time in presence of a suitable nutritive medium and suffered to grow into maturity. So then, although we cannot actually handle or photograph the germ, we are enabled to deal with that material something as confidently as we can now examine the properties of the etheric atom in connection with radium emanations. And, at all events, the suggestion which readily presents itself to the mind brackets the bacterial germ and the etheric atom in the same order of magnitude. If the etheric is, as we now feel all but sure, diffused through universal space, there is nothing to outrage the understanding in the hypothesis that so also the bacterial germ—or what may perhaps more conveniently, in view of future thinking, be described as an organic atom —also pervades all space.

And for a moment let us turn to the results of some recent researches connected with the endurance of bacterial germs in presence of extreme conditions of temperature. That they are sensitive in a remarkable degree to increase of temperature we have been long aware. No greater heat than that of boiling-water will sterilise any substance and destroy the vitality of whatever bacterial germs it may have contained. But since laboratories have been supplied with the resources which enable us to experiment with extremes of minus temperature, it has been found that no degree of cold suffices to destroy the vitality of the bacterial germ. Left for long periods in liquid hydrogen, the temperature of which is only a few degrees above the absolute zero, bacterial germs nevertheless show themselves, on returning to more genial conditions, fully as active as before. In the cold of interstellar space they may exist, it would appear,

unchangeably, in company with the equally frigid etheric atom, torpid as long as that temperature continues, but ready to display their mysterious internal attribute of life as soon as circumstances may put them in presence of the warmth in which they are qualified to expand.

Now here at last we come into the presence of a theory which, if well founded, will emancipate us at once from the whole embarrassment attending the question we set out to consider—How did life originate on this or any other planet? Matter, in the intangible invisible condition of the ether pervades all space available under the influence of creative will for the construction of planets. Life in the diffused condition of the bacterial germ or organic atom may equally be diffused throughout space, available whenever needed for the development of living forms on any newly evolving planet ripe for their reception. We may think of our globe during its incandescent period whirling through space and destroying or dissipating into other forms inconceivable myriads of the organic atoms it encounters on its journey. But more inconceivable myriads from outer infinity restore the equilibrium of Nature in its wake, and a time comes when its surface has cooled down to conditions in which the organic atoms against which it impinges suffer destruction no longer in its embrace. They have, on the contrary, fallen in with the conditions appointed by Nature to promote their growth. The temperature in which they find themselves is at last adapted to their constitution, and all that is still wanting to enable us to realise every stage of the process from that moment up to the development of conscious animal forms is the comprehension of the way in which Nature, in the beginning, may supply the substitute for the nutritive media in which, at the present stage of organic chemistry, we find it necessary to immerse the organic atom before it will grow. But is

such immersion absolutely necessary to the process? It is necessary to a rapid and visible development of the organic atom into bacteria that the microscope can deal with, but in our atmosphere alone is it not possible that with adequate time assigned to the operation, the germ will be capable of deriving sufficient nutriment to blossom forth into maturity? The vegetable kingdom within our observation has the power of converting inorganic matter into the cellular organic substance that builds up its leaves and stems. There is nothing to constrain the reason in the assumption that the organic atom is equally endowed with the capacity of infusing its own life principle into the etheric or even the more complex chemical molecules it may gather in the course of its growth.

The suggestion embodied in this essay does not profess to interpret the inner significance or nature of the life principle. That may approximately be understood when many of the subtler forces of Nature, reserved for the investigation of a later race, come fairly within the range of experimental research. However simple may be any form of vegetable or animal substance with which we may have to deal, it is obvious that it consists of matter in a peculiar condition fitting it to be the vehicle of life, not that it is life itself, which is an utterly different thing. Those who attempt, in their own minds, to account for life itself, are attempting to comprehend the nature of Divinity, a vague expression, surrounded in most imaginations with a mass of incongruous detail, but representing a sublime mystery, the existence of which, behind the scenes of the universe, must be no less certain for the philosophic thinker than—for the material observer—is the existence of the sun behind the screen of cloud on a day which, however overcast, is still illuminated by daylight. But in search of an answer to the question—How did life begin on this globe?—we are not

called upon to touch the stupendous question relating to the origin of life itself. The mystery lies much more nearly in the region of thought that relates simply to the development on the planet of material forms in which that which we call life in its highest significance may exist. The organic matter itself, whether in its simplest or most complex manifestations, is but the vehicle of the life that some systems of philosophy describe as the "one life" pervading all Nature. And we need not shun the recognition of another theory, which some systems of philosophy maintain, that life in a certain sense may be diffused even through the rock foundations of the earth, through the mineral molecules of which that is built up, or even in the ultimate etheric atom itself. But that region of thinking lies in the dreamland of metaphysics, and, compared with that, the question concerning the origin of organic matter qualified to be the vehicle of vivid and ultimately self-conscious life is one with which we may regard ourselves as immediately concerned.

At all events, the hypothesis here set forth is one which blends instinctively with our reason, and relieves us from the disagreeable necessity of supposing the uniformities of Nature broken into during the earlier stages of this world's existence to overcome a hitch or difficulty in connection with the general design. The theologian who clings to the literal accuracy of allegorical fable, who seeks an escape from the obvious uniformities of Nature within observable periods, falls back on the theory that, although the age of miracles is past, divine Providence could not manage without them when mankind was in its infancy. The modern man of science who is hunted back by the embarrassments of the problem into a corner, in which he admits that once upon a time Nature may have built protoplasm out of inorganic matter, although it is quite clear she has left off

the habit of doing so in later years, is really taking a leaf out of the book of the mediæval theologian. The unnecessary conjecture is only due to the habits of mind surviving from the period when the actual constitution of the universal ether was wholly misunderstood, and now that an epoch-making revelation has been obtained in connection with that great branch of natural history, it is much more than likely that the new habits of thought thus engendered will creep into many departments of speculation, and lead before long to the recognition of a hypothetical medium interpenetrating the ether-filled immensity, the ultimate constituent parts of which we have here ventured to describe as the organic atom.

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